L I B R I U M

by

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"*Librium is Freedom.*"

John Preston

1 TELEVISION SCREEN

A DOCUMENTARY. IMAGES from the ravaging wars of our century.

TELEVISION NARRATOR
... for decades, for no better reason than mutual contempt, civilization hovered on the brink of nuclear war. Peoples in eastern Europe massacred each other over forgotten cultural grudges. 'Tensions have again escalated' was the familiar refrain ...

Now images of CHEMISTS diligently working in labs ...

TELEVISION NARRATOR (CONT'D)
It became inescapable - if Man were to survive into the future, he must find a way to govern his emotions before they governed him into non-existence ...

And now rows upon rows of BRIGHT, UPLIFTED YOUNG FACES, stretching out of sight in their crisp black uniforms ...

TELEVISION NARRATOR (CONT'D)
And finally in this, the half of the 21st century, we can say we have achieved our goal. 50 years have passed with neither war nor murder nor hate nor contempt. At long last Man is at peace with himself. All due to the great equalizer - Equium.

But it is lost on the FIGURE in the FOREGROUND of this SUBURBAN LIVING ROOM.

Ragged, desperate - a modern-day pirate - he gently, almost lovingly, places a scratched black platter onto an old PLAYSKOOL RECORD PLAYER.

Watching, mesmerized, as the disc goes round and a child's lullaby - *Hushabye Street* - begins to eke out the set's tiny speakers. His Adam's apple rises, knotting ...

Abruptly, his eyes snap out the wndow. Screeching around the distant corner, a phalanx of POLICE CARS.

Forgetting the lullaby, he *moves*.

2 INT. ROOM - DAY

The man's spiritual brothers sit here scattered. Long braided hair some, tattooed others, pierced all, they sit telling jokes, playing cards, laughing with each other.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

Don't be deceived. They are, in fact, a rolling army. Wolves, living on the move, taking what they need where they find it.

The door flies open, the man bursting in.

MAN
POLICE!!!

At the window, SEAMUS CLANCY, handsome and brilliant beyond his years, hits his feet milliseconds ahead of his men.

SEAMUS
You know what to do!

They jump to it, snatching up the CANVASES that lean against the walls around the room.

VAN GOGH'S SUNFLOWERS, MONET'S HAYSTACKS ... MUNCH'S SCREAM; some of the greatest artworks of mankind in the hands of these criminals ...

In the street below outside, UNMARKED POLICE CARS are screeching up at the curb.

Dropping a SHOTGUN from beneath his coat Seamus *shacks!* in the first shell and faces his men.

Around the room, every heart is pounding, every chest rising with raw emotion.

SEAMUS (CONT'D)
It all comes down to this.

3 EXT. QUIET NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

And, under the soothing strains of *Hushabye Street*, it does. A swarm of yellow-jackets, the police cars slam the curb outside the house. The front door flies open ...

FIRST MAN
HYAAAAAH!!!

The desperadoes come streaming out *PAPOW! PAPOW!* guns blazing, spreading out across the lawn, OPENING fire without quarter on the law enforcers who ...

Return fire with automatic weapons, bullets thickening the air, chewing the house, cartwheeling great tufts of sod as one by one, across the lawn, Seamus' men begin to drop.

In what seems nothing more than a moment, they are all down and SPECIAL TACTICS TEAMS are swarming past their dying bodies up the steps and into the house ....

3 CONTINUED:

TACTICS COMMANDER
Go!Go!Go!

The sound of gunfire erupts within the house.

At the curb, a BLACK SEDAN stops. Out of it, steps a MAN. He surveys the house with a keen eye.

Thoughtful. Quiet, soothing to look at.

JOHN PRESTON looks to HIS PARTNER emerging out the other side of the car - PARTRIDGE.

4 INT. HOUSE - DAY

They move quickly, quietly inside the front door. Sounds of gunfire ringing through distant parts of the house.

A glance exchanged. Years of experience there.

5 INT. HOUSE - DAY

Synchronized, like a machine, Preston and Partridge move silently through the house.

A DESPERADO steps abruptly out of a doorway ahead, shotgun not an inch from Partridge's head.

POW!, almost before he even appeared, Preston has put him down with a bullet to the brain. The two look at each other. *Close.*

6 INT. HOUSE - DAY

They reach a tight KNOT of police forces, clustered combat-style outside a CLOSED DOOR at the end of a hall. The OFFICER IN CHARGE, quickly approaches, speaking in whispers.

OFFICER IN CHARGE
Lights out. May be as many as a dozen inside.

Preston nods.

PRESTON
Once the door's down, blow the bulbs.

The O.I.C. nods, snapping his fingers at the security forces, who scramble to take position.

Preston stands, eyes closed for a moment, leveling his breathing. Two officers quickly place pistols into his hanging hands while three more take position at the door - zeroing the hinges and lock with shotguns ...

6 CONTINUED:

One deep, steady breath. Preston opens his eyes. Nods.

PAPOW! POW! POW! the three officers BLOW out the hinges ...

7 INT. ROOM - DAY

A doorway of light opens into a world of black as the dark slab of the door collapses inward under the feet of a SILHOUETTED FIGURE in a flowing dark coat.

BABLAM! the security forces BLOW the lights behind, raining down fiery red sparks as everything drops to PITCH BLACK.

POW! PADAPOW! POW! like a string of fire-crackers, the darkness GOES OFF with the stroboscopic action of John Preston's guns, punctuating the black world into a discotheque of instantaneous spit-fire globes of light ...

A black world defined by fleeting retinal-burst images of his adversaries slamming the walls with the impact of his bullets.

And then, three blinding seconds and thirty bullets later, his guns fall silent and blackness rules again.

Behind him, FLASHLIGHTS strobe into the darkness from the hall as the police forces enter the room - fresh young faces mirroring their astonishment as they count the fallen.

Wordlessly, Preston turns and exits.

8 INT. HOUSE - DAY

The dust has settled now. It is quiet. Preston is met in the battle-scarred main hall by the Tactics Commander and his team who have secured the upper floor.

TACTICS COMMANDER
House is clean. We found nothing.

Preston nods, taking in every detail from floor to ceiling.

PRESTON
Clear it.

The Tactics Commander glances at Partridge - who nods with simple gravity. Do it.

The Tactics Officer jumps to it, ushering his men streaming out. Preston turns to look briefly to Partridge ...

9 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Preston stands in the kitchen, taking it in, feeling it. A man lies dead, half on the kitchen table, half off ...

9 CONTINUED:

But he takes no notice, so intent his communion with the room.

10 INT. UPPER ROOM - DAY

He stops in the doorway of an empty second floor room. Light eking sickly through a dusty window.

He stands for a long moment, feeling the air.

PRESTON
This is it.

Partridge nods to the SPECIAL TEAMS who move quickly up.

PARTRIDGE
Where ...?

Preston nods to a SPACE in the middle of the floorboards, covered by a threadbare rug.

PRESTON
There.

The Special Teams jump quickly to it; stripping away the rug, splintering up the floorboarding with crowbars.

Revealing, within a jagged hole, atop many other similar sized canvasses, the MONA LISA. Smiling back at them with her quiet smile.

Special Teams back off to let A MAN WITH GLASSES through. He kneels at the edge of the hole, swabs an edge of the painting with a Q-tip and drops it into a small test tube.

He shakes it, studying the reactant chemicals. Turns, nodding with gravity at Preston.

CHEMIST
It's real.

Without turning, Preston says to the Conflagration Teams who step abruptly in beside him with FLAME THROWERS:

PRESTON
Burn it.

WHOOOSH! the two Conflagration Units unleash a torrent of FLAME into the jagged hole. Igniting the great paintings in burning petroleum jelly.

Preston turns wordlessly and walks out.

He is our hero.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

PARTRIDGE lingers for a moment, staring at Mona Lisa's smile as it curls up in the flames along with a billion dollars of mankind's other greatest artworks.

11 INT. POLICE VEHICLE - DAY

Preston and Partridge ride in silence in the back of the vehicle, watching the quaint, silent neighborhood go by.

Odd, but there isn't a soul to be seen in this neighborhood.

Every door has been painted with a plague-era black 'T', and every 5th or so house, has been burned to the ground ...

But it seems to make no impression on Preston. He looks over at Partridge, his partner's strong jaw tensed, contemplative, as he stares out the window at the empty, passing neighborhood.

Peeking out of the side-pocket of his partner's topcoat can be seen the yellowing binding of a BOOK.

Preston nods to it.

PRESTON
Why didn't you just leave it for the Conflagration Team?

Partridge looks at him - surprised for an instant - then realizes Preston is talking about the book. He pulls it out, a book of YEATS' POETRY - hefts its weight.

PARTRIDGE
I would have. But we're required to log one item from each A&R into Evidentiary Storage.

He shrugs, dropping it carelessly back into his pocket. Looks back out the window at the vacant, passing neighborhood. Becoming thoughtful.

PARTRIDGE (CONT'D)
How long, Preston - until it's all gone - until we've burned every last bit of it?

Preston looks at his partner. Smiles.

PRESTON
You have to be patient. We've burned a lot already but resources are tight.

A tight beat. Then Partridge nods. Sure ... sure ...

11 CONTINUED:

Ahead, the DEAD SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD abruptly ends, as * though crushed in mid-thought by a giant stone foot.

11A A MASSIVE GATE - DAY *

Girded by MASSIVE WALLS some 75 feet tall and stretching off out of sight in either direction like the Great Wall of China.

Atop the gate, carved in granite, massive stone Hitlerian letters proclaim *LIBRIA*. And, in smaller script below that: *Equium est Libertas* *

Standing atop the precipice, a SENTRY clad in white watches through the featureless black glass of his helmet as Preston and Partridge's car is checked through the gate below.

Barrel of his white-metal machinegun following as the car passes from the faded dead flower that is the Nether ... *

Through the vast, opening doors ...

To the vista of a VAST WALLED CITYSCAPE.

Nothing less than a stunning constructivist black and white geometry.

LIBRIA.

Le Corbusier's "machines for living in". Cold and beautiful.

A bichromatic masterpiece in which more has been done with the elegant simplicity of black and white than others before have managed with all the spectrum of the rainbow ....

And unlike the dead neighborhood - sealed off like East * Berlin - the city is teeming with people. A peaceful mass - flowing with quiet harmony and homogeny. *

PRESTON, in the car, watches as the population drifts by. A * BATTALION OF BLACK-UNIFORMED CHILDREN, healthy, bright-faced, * practicing in perfect uinison for parade in a square ... *

A car that has stopped to allow an elderly couple to cross * ... *

FAMILY preparing to cross the street. Father, Mother, Son, Daughter, holding hands ...

Waiting for the light to change.

His gaze stays on them - longer maybe, than warranted.

11A CONTINUED:

Abruptly a SHARP BEEPING blinks him out of his momentary dream. He joins the others in the car as they raise their wrists and flick off their alarms, all beeping in concert.

Wordlessly, around the vehicle, the men flip open WHITE CASES marked with MORNING and EVENING SLOTS for each day.

Each routinely extracts this evening's GLASS AMPULE - marked *Evening 8/16* ...

PRESTON
(reflective)
Every time we come from the Nethers to city - it reminds why we do what we do ...

Partridge does not look up as he clicks his vial into the small PNEUMATIC SYRINGE tucked into the bottom of his case.

PARTRIDGE
It does?

Preston looks sharply over - not certain he heard correctly. Cocks his head.

PRESTON
I beg your pardon?

There is a pneumatic *pop!* as Partridge and the others inject themselves. Finally, he turns to look at Preston a frank moment - eyes searching. Then - simply - nods.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
It does.

Preston holds on him a narrow instant. But is interrupted as the Driver looks suddenly over his shoulder.

DRIVER
Excuse me - a situation at the Stad - do we want to stop?

11B EXT. STAD LIBRIA - DAY

Partridge and Preston proceed rapidly through the two great stone columns that form the gateway to the city's vast communal stadium where they are met by two white-clad SWEEPERS who fall into quick lock-step with them.

SWEEPER
We can't take the shot without endangering people ...

Preston nods, on it.

11B CONTINUED:

PRESTON
Show me.

11C EXT. STADIUM COMMON - DAY

Just outside the stadium-proper, Preston and Partridge are led through large knot of concerned-looking people into an OPEN SPACE ringed by ARMED SWEEPERS ...

... all giving ample space to a SWEAT-SLICKENED, DESPERATE MAN who holds a GUN and is railing at the surrounding crowd.

MAN
You stupid fucks! Look at you! You're sheep! Fucking sheep!

POW! he *fires* a SHOT over their heads. The crowd flinches, but does not budge.

MAN (CONT'D)
You see! You see! What kind of fucking reaction is that!

At his feet lies a DEAD WOMAN. Bullet in her heart.

Preston and Partridge exchange a glance.

Preston unholsters his own guns, handing them to his partner. And steps out into the ring. A MURMUR travels through the crowd. The Man *snaps* the gun round towards him.

Preston raises his hands.

PRESTON
Easy. No one here means you any harm.

MAN
Well, they should!

POW! He *fires* another shot over the crowd. They flinch again, but remain rooted.

MAN (CONT'D)
You see!?!
(crowd)
Hello? Hello? I just killed my wife.
She fucked another man so I killed her.

He looks very particularly at Preston.

MAN (CONT'D)
I'm a menace to your fucked up society.

A displeased murmur ripples through the crowd.

11C CONTINUED:

PRESTON
A menace maybe ...
(crowd)
But you're wrong about them. This is something that works. Better than it ever has.

MAN
Works!?! All these freaking sheep should be running for the their lives! Shitting their pants; feeling terrified, feeling scared for their fucking lives; feeling something.

PRESTON
Like what you're feeling now?

The man grinds silent, Preston's words hitting home. Preston takes a step forward.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
(crowd)
Look at them ...

In spite of himself, the man does. Unlike him, everyone healthy, relaxed-looking, innocent, in balance.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
What's missing? Stress? Depression? Can you remember, in your whole life, ever seeing an overweight person?

He shakes his head.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
All the reasons to overeat - anxiety, worry, unhappiness - all gone.

He takes a step forward.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Along with sadness, anger, hate ...

He looks at the dead woman at the man's feet. Back ...

PRESTON (CONT'D)
... jealousy.

A murmur of concurrence from the crowd. The Man's angry facade strains. Struggling. Beginning to break.

MAN
What the fuck do you want from me ...

11C CONTINUED: (2)

PRESTON
All I want - is for you to stop shaking.

The man looks at him - surprised at the compassionate words. Preston takes another step.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
I want you to stop ... dreading ... I want you to stop ... raging inside ...

In spite of himself, the Man swallows hard. Preston stops not a yard away - closed FIST rising up between them. The Man tenses his grip on the gun - but Preston does not blink.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
I want the rushing in your brain - all of it ...

Like a flower, his fingers bloom open.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
... to stop.

In his open palm - glinting - an AMPULE of golden liquid.

EQUIUM.

The man holds on it - tears brimming into his eyes.

Suddenly, faster than thought, Preston *strips* the gun out of his hands and *slams* him to the concrete.

Instantly, the Sweepers swarm the man, gagging and binding him with stunning swiftness. The crowd politely applauds.

Preston's eyes meet Partridge's in the crowd.

Preston smiles. Partridge doesn't.

12 EXT. PALACE OF JUSTICE - DUSK

A great edifice, at whose crest is a great 'T'.

13 INT. OFFICES OF THE VICE-COUNCIL - DUSK

PRESTON stands at attention before a desk situated at the end of a vast hall at which a MAN in an elegant suit sits stamping the crest of the Tetragrammaton - an ornate 'T' onto a stack of papers.

13 CONTINUED:

Behind him the great 'T' has been cut through the wall and the sun's setting rays blaze through it. *

Through it, Preston can see a GREAT RALLY that is taking place on a common that stretches away from the sunset into the night. Great beams of light stabbing upward, forming a great colonnade marching up into the heavens ... *

One tiny, distant figure illuminated, gesticulating, punctuated by the approving roar of the crowd ... *

Off to one side, the only furniture in the room other than the man's desk, a MASSIVE GLOBE of the earth standing in an ornate pedestal by the desk. Across the continent of North America, *'Libria'* is printed in an ornate script ... *

And, fading around the sphere, other names, *XylyX, Entropia,* and others, mark the lesser continents ...

Setting aside his papers, the MAN looks Preston over a keen moment, assessing him.

MAN
Thank you for coming, Cleric. I assume you know who I am?

PRESTON
Yes Sir. Of course, Sir. You are Vice-Council DuPont of the Third Councillary of the Tetragrammaton. You are Father's voice.

DUPONT
(thoughtfully)
Yes ... I am at that.
(sitting back)
I've heard a great deal about you, Preston. They say you're the veritable Fourth Horseman of the TetraGram. That you were raised from childhood in the Cleric Monasteries, schooled in the arts of intuition and strife. That there is none better. *

PRESTON
I do only what I can, Sir.

DUPONT
They also tell me you are deeply empathetic. That you can find contraband wherever it may be hidden; you've a nose for it...

13 CONTINUED: (2)

PRESTON
I've a good record, Sir.

Vice-Council DuPont considers him a moment.

DUPONT
Why do you imagine that is, Cleric?

PRESTON
I ... I'm not sure Vice-Council. I just ... put myself in their position. Where would I conceal illegal material.

DUPONT
If you had ceased your Equium interval. If you were ... a Sense Offender ...

PRESTON
Yes Sir, of course, Sir.

DuPont considers him with bright, intelligent eyes.

DUPONT
You were senior officer on an Apprehension and Recovery today?

PRESTON
Yes Sir. In the restricted zone.

DUPONT
It was paintings this time was it not?

PRESTON
Yes Sir.

DUPONT
And the result was?

PRESTON
Combustion, Sir. As always.

DUPONT
How did you feel about that?

Preston blinks at him a confused moment.

PRESTON
I'm ... sorry. I don't understand.

DUPONT
How did you feel - watching those paintings burning. Sublimating away into invisible gas - never again to be laid upon by human eyes.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED: (3)

PRESTON
(still confused)
I ... didn't feel anything. I was just doing my job.

DUPONT
Yes ... yes, of course you were.

He considers a moment. Refocuses on Preston.

DUPONT (CONT'D)
You're a family man? Children ... ?

PRESTON
A boy and a girl, Sir. The boy is in the monastery - on path to becoming a Cleric.

DUPONT
Quite good - and ... the mother? *

PRESTON
My spouse was arrested and incinerated for Sense Offense four years ago, Sir.

DUPONT
I see. By yourself?

Preston hesitates a micro-instant.

PRESTON
No Sir. By another.

DUPONT
Really? How did you come to miss it?

PRESTON
I ... I've asked myself that same question, Sir. I ... I don't know.

DuPont focuses on him very intently for a deep moment.

DUPONT
Do not let your vigilance flag, Cleric. You may still be needed in this battle.

Something in the very specific way he says it gives Preston a twinge. He nods ...

PRESTON
Yes Sir.

DuPont waves a hand, dismissing him. Preston hesitates an instant - then turns sharply on his heel and walks out.

14 EXT. PALACE OF JUSTICE -DUSK

Halfway down the palatial steps, he drifts to a stop, blinking into the space before him.

Remembering something.

15 INT. DESK SPACE - HALL OF ENFORCEMENT - NIGHT

Empty this time of night. Preston sits watching DIGITAL REPLAY of the car ride back from the Nethers on his desk monitor. *

PRESTON'S IMAGE *
(reflective) *
Every time we come from the Nethers to *
city it reminds why we do what we do ... *

PARTRIDGE'S IMAGE *
It does? *

Freezing it - he plays Partridge's quiet line again.

PARTRIDGE'S IMAGE (CONT'D)
It does? *

His face is turned partially from the camera. Preston considers the frozen image of his partner for a long, dark, * time.

15A INT. POLICE EVIDENTIARY STORAGE - HALL OF ENFORCEMENT - NIGHT *

Preston stops, facing the officer behind the desk fronting * the vast evidentiary storage facility compiled for the * prosecution and sentencing of Sense Offenders. *

He hesitates only a hard instant before ... *

PRESTON *
Prosecutorial evidence for A&R 136,890; I *
need it. *

The Officer dutifully consults his log - searching. *

PRESTON (CONT'D) *
It was late this afternoon; it may not *
have showed up in the records yet. *

OFFICER *
Very sorry, Cleric - nothing has been *
logged and nothing is pending under that *
entry. *

15A CONTINUED:

PRESTON
Evidence was definitely logged - please check again.

The Officer makes another cursory check. Shakes his head.

OFFICER
I'm sorry, Sir - there's nothing.

PRESTON
It was an item of evidence brought in personally by Grammaton Erroll Partridge.

OFFICER
Sir - Cleric Partridge has not entered anything in for evidentiary consideration in weeks.

Preston blinks at him.

PRESTON
You must be mistaken. It ... it was a book of some kind.

OFFICER
Cleric ... I truly don't know how to be more specific.

He shakes his head.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
There's nothing.

Preston stares back at him.

16 INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT - OMIT

17 INT. APARTMENT CORRIDOR - NIGHT - OMIT

18 INT. PARTRIDGE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - OMIT

19 INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT - OMIT

20 EXT. GATE 34-B - NIGHT

A small CONVOY of VEHICLES pulls to the towering edifice of GATE 34-b to the unlit darkness of the Zone.

The Armed Guard snaps to attention.

20 CONTINUED:

PRESTON
You confirm he came through this gate this evening?

GUARD
Yes Sir. Our records show 8:10 P.M. And Sir ...

He hesitates.

PRESTON
Speak.

GUARD
Well Sir, we assumed it was Enforcement related. He's been coming through every night for the last two weeks ...

Preston absorbs this a mortal beat. Putting the window back up, he waves to the driver and the convoy rolls past, under the keen gaze of a SWEEPER CREW in its distinctive white uniforms, and through the massive gates of 34-B.

21 EXT. THE ZONE - NIGHT

The car sits, just the idle rumble of its ignition in the silence of a great empty intersection in the unlit dead city.

BRANDT, Preston's freshly assigned partner, a HANDSOME YOUNG MAN, sits in the shadows of the driver's seat.

He looks to Preston - an eagerness in his eyes.

BRANDT
I hope you're as pleased to be assigned me as I am for the placement. I'm told it's a career-making advancement.

Preston says nothing, silently surveying the abandoned city. Eyes sifting through the silhouettes of the buildings.

BRANDT (CONT'D)
Not that it's the only reason I'm pleased to be here. You're the most intuitive of the Grammaton Clerics. Everyone knows it. I'm intuitive too. I can learn from you. How to focus. So that I miss no detail. So that I know the presence of feeling before it's even felt ...

A long beat. Finally, quietly, Preston speaks. Nodding towards the dark spires of a great, DEAD CATHEDRAL caught in the distant moonlight.

21 CONTINUED:

PRESTON
He's there.

22 INT. CATHEDRAL - ZONE - NIGHT

A real cathedral - a still-standing relic from ages-gone-by.

PARTRIDGE sits in the front pew, candles lit on either side, reading a DOG-EARED PAPERBACK. The great cathedral doors behind him creak open.

His eyes neither rise nor turn ... only continuing to read as the footsteps approach echoing down the aisle.

PRESTON stops alone in front of his partner.

PARTRIDGE
I knew you'd have to face facts eventually.

With the tip of his GUN, Preston raises the cover of the book. *THE POETRY OF YEATS.*

PARTRIDGE (CONT'D)
Ever had the pleasure ...

PRESTON
Have you lost your mind.

PARTRIDGE
(reads)
But I, being poor, have only my dreams; I have spread my dreams under your feet; Tread softly, for you tread on my dreams.
(looks up)
I assume you dream, Preston?

PRESTON
You've got to come with me.

Partridge only looks back at him, spattered in the colored moonlight splintering down through the cathedral's great, broken STAINED GLASS WHEEL.

PARTRIDGE
How can you be immune to it, John?

Preston looks up to the great window. Back. Immune to it.

PRESTON
You have to come with me. I'll do what I can to see they go easy on you.

22 CONTINUED:

PARTRIDGE
We both know - they never go easy. *

A steady silence as the two men regard each other in the flickering candlelight.

PRESTON
(finally)
Then I'm sorry.

But Partridge just sadly shakes his head.

PARTRIDGE
No. You're not. You don't even know the meaning. It's just a vestigial word for a feeling you've never felt.

Preston is silent.

PARTRIDGE (CONT'D)
Don't you see, Preston - it's gone. Everything that makes us what we are; traded away.

PRESTON
There's no war. No murder. *

Partridge searches his eyes through the colored gloom.

PARTRIDGE
What is it you think we do?

A hard silence. Preston's teeth grinding. Anyone else would be dead already.

PRESTON
You're wrong. You've been with me; you've seen how it can be. Jealousy and rage. Anger. Hate...

Slowly, sadly, silently, Partridge nods.

PARTRIDGE
A heavy, heavy cost ...

His hand FALLS to a DARK OBJECT in his lap ...

PARTRIDGE (CONT'D)
I pay it gladly ...

Preston sees, in the moonlight's colored glint, that the object is PARTRIDGE'S GUN. His hand resting on it ...

22 CONTINUED: (2)

Preston pulls his own gun up in line with Partridge's eyes. Those eyes look past the gun - up into his own eyes.

Then Partridge raises the open book. Between their eyes ...

Ending the conversation. *Forever.*

In his lap, his thumb *click!* cocks back the hammer on his gun. An eternal moment ...

POW! Preston puts a bullet through the book. His friend crumples behind it in the muted color of the shadows.

Preston looks for a moment at the dark form of his former partner and friend huddled in the pew before him.

And feels a strange, unsettling chill.

Something, some strange, distant voice knocking on the door of his unconscious.

Turning, he sees a DARK FIGURE standing in the doorway of the cathedral - watching him. That figure takes one step forward into the splintered moonlight.

BRANDT. A feral excitement in his eyes.

23 EXT. PRESTON'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

The car pulls to a stop at the curb before the concrete bunker that comprises the ten thousand unit building that contains the cubicle that Preston lives in.

Preston steps out. Brandt's voice floats out of the car.

BRANDT
Cleric ...

Preston glances momentarily back. Brandt's eyes are bright.

BRANDT (CONT'D)
I could only hope to one day be as uncompromising as you.

And, pulling the door shut, he drives off. Preston watches after him a moment. Within him, something... not quite right.

24 INT. PRESTON'S UNIT - NIGHT

A TEN YEAR-OLD BOY, dressed in the severe black uniform of the CLERIC YOUTH, the same uniform of the children on the parade ground, sits watching the TELEVISION.

24 CONTINUED:

On a TELEVISION, a MAN, BROAD FEATURES, WARM EYES, speaks frankly into the camera. He is the FATHER of Libria.

TELEVISION/FATHER
I am Father.

Father smiles.

TELEVISION/FATHER (CONT'D)
You are Father.

And changes - seamlessly - into a PRETTY WOMAN.

TELEVISION/WOMAN
He is Father. We are Father.

Then a boy.

TELEVISION/BOY
She is Father. They are Father.

Who becomes a young girl.

TELEVISION/GIRL
Father is Everywhere.

These are the FACES OF LIBRIA, different every time but always beginning with the serene face of Father himself ... And always playing, everywhere, all the time.

The boy, Preston's 10 YEAR-OLD SON, ROBBIE does not remove his eyes from the images on the television as his father comes through the door, settling into the house.

After a beat ...

ROBBIE
Father ...?

Preston glances from the mail he has picked up.

PRESTON
Yes?

The boy is silent a moment. Then, rotely ...

ROBBIE
'Every person who feels is an offender ... has moved against society ... has chosen self over whole ...'

It is hard to tell - if it is a question or a statement. Preston nods.

24 CONTINUED: (2)

PRESTON
The Manifest Doctrinals - yes ...

The boy looks over - bathed in blue light.

ROBBIE
'... and so should be annihilated ...'

Preston hesitates the slightest fraction of an instant. A strange rock in his throat.

PRESTON
Yes.

The boy's eyes, dark wells in the light of the television, play on him another unreadable moment.

ROBBIE
I saw Bobbie Taylor crying today. He didn't know - but I saw ...

He returns his attention back to the T.V.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
Do you think I should report him?

The almost casual way the boy asks it, catches Preston strangely off guard for an instant. He doesn't know why it takes him a moment to reply:

PRESTON
Unquestionably.

25 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Preston lies down on one side of a bed made for two. Above his side, the simple stencil, John Preston, Cleric 782.

The stenciling above the other side has been chiseled crudely out of the concrete - leaving just a blank space where a name once was.

He stares at the wall for a long time before closing his eyes.

26 INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

His eyes blink open. Dawn.

Finding himself still crowded onto his side of the bed. It's the way he has slept every night since his wife was taken.

But, for some reason, this morning - he notices it.

26 CONTINUED:

He makes his way into the tiny bathroom. Just a sink, a toilet and a small personal maintenance mirror.

Opening a drawer, he pulls out his DOSE CASE and, flipping it open, withdraws the ampule marked MORNING 8/17.

He sets it on the counter and bends to brush his teeth when a tinkling *crash* brings his eyes up.

He sees, to his surprise, that, with his arm, he has knocked the morning's dosage off the counter onto the concrete floor.

It lies there - shattered. He stares for a moment at the TINY POOL of liquid and glass on the floor.

VOICE
What are you doing?

He turns, startled. ROBBIE stands there in his uniform, already ready to go to school. The boy's eyes move to the pool of amber and glass on the floor.

Shooting sharply back up to his father's.

ROBBIE
I said what are you doing?

PRESTON
I ... I accidentally dropped my morning interval. I ...
(perplexed)
I took it out before I brushed my teeth...

He looks at the boy, somewhat baffled.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
I never take it out before I brush my teeth ...

The ten year-old holds on him a narrow moment.

ROBBIE
Then you'll go by Equilibrium, log the loss and get a replacement ...

PRESTON
Yes. Of course.

The boy lingers an instant longer - then, satisfied, leaves. Preston's eyes return to the enigmatic amber pool evaporating off his bathroom floor.

26 CONTINUED: (2)

PRESTON (CONT'D)
... of course ...

27 INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

When Preston enters, Robbie and Preston's SEVEN YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER LISA are already sitting eating breakfast.

Preston sits down to his food.

ROBBIE
Your new partner called ... *

Preston looks over - surprised. *

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
A Sense Offender's been reported here in * the city. He says he'll pick you up at 10 * for the A&R. *
(a hesitation) *
I hope you don't mind ... I took the * liberty of telling him you would be at * the Equilibrium replacing your dose. *

Preston holds on the boy who is clearly pleased with his own * initiative. Finds a nod ... *

PRESTON
No ... of course not. That was ... the * right thing to do. *

Beside Robbie, Lisa, bored, is amusing herself by stirring * her cereal and watching it swirl around the bowl.

ROBBIE fixes the girl with a dark look. *

ROBBIE
Stop that.

The girl looks furtively to her father ... then returns to eating with the same mechanical torpor as her brother.

28 INT. DUPONT'S OFFICES - MORNING - OMIT *

*

29 EXT. HALL OF EQUILIBRIUM - DAY

Preston pauses on the sidewalk outside the massive Fritz Langian edifice - deeply engraved with the solemn words HALL OF EQUILIBRIUM and the motto *'Equium est Libertas'*. *

It's massively stark concrete columns rising upwards, shoulders upon which the mighty building sits.

30 INT. HALL OF EQUILIBRIUM - DAY

Preston stands in line. On either side, as far up and as far down as he can see, stretch similar lines. Multitudes of people. Waiting to get their Equium replacements. *

On monitors lining the wall - the changing faces of Libria...

FATHER *
I am Father ... You are Father ... *

He glances at his watch. Shifts impatiently. Looks around. No one else seems impatient. He glances at his watch again.

Almost ten. If things don't hurry up, he'll be late. *

The line moves one person closer to the window. Two more people and he'll finally be there. He glances at his watch again. Still almost ten. The line moves one forward.

Abruptly, he steps out of the queue and heads for the doors. A PROCTOR encounters him before he has made a dozen steps.

PROCTOR
Sir, is everything okay?

PRESTON
(quickly)
No, no, everything's fine. I'm just late. I'm late ...

He steps around the Proctor, walking backward towards the doors now as he continues to explain, tapping his watch ...

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Late. I'll be back later ...

And he is gone. Leaving the Proctor staring curiously after.

31 EXT. HALL OF EQUILIBRIUM - DAY

As Preston comes down the steps, a CAR skids up to the curb, passenger door swinging open. BRANDT is behind the wheel.

BRANDT
You're early - even better than punctual. *
I like that. Hop in. *

Preston looks into the car an instant. Then gets in. *

32 INT. CAR - DAY

Brandt guides the car into traffic.

32 CONTINUED:

BRANDT
How're the lines?

Preston looks at him. *

BRANDT (CONT'D)
They're always terrible at that place. *
I'm surprised you were able to get your
interval and get out so quickly. *

Preston hesitates. *

PRESTON
They were ... they're fine today. *

Nodding, Brandt reaches inside his coat, pulling out his GUN and checking it as he drives.

BRANDT
Maybe I'll drop by later. I got on the
scale this morning. Do you know I've
lost nearly 20 pounds in the last 8
months? Naturally, I'll want to go by
and have my interval adjusted. *

PRESTON
You ... shouldn't have much problem. *

He watches as Brandt snaps his gun closed, reholstering it.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Are you expecting resistance? *

Brandt looks at him. Smiles thinly.

BRANDT
That's something you'll find about me, *
Cleric. I'm a wary person. Cautious by
nature. Always expecting the worst.

33 INT. HOUSE - LIBRIA - DAY

BAM! a door explodes inward off its hinges as the BATTERING RAM TEAMS make way for PRESTON and BRANDT entering the house.

Preston is immediately accosted by a FURIOUS DARK-HAIRED WOMAN coming at him down the hall ....

WOMAN
You can't do this! You *cannot* do this!

Preston brushes past her.

33 CONTINUED:

PRESTON
We're TetraGrammaton; there's nothing we can't do.

Her eyes go dark and she CHARGES him.

WOMAN
You son of a bitch!

He easily ducks her charge and, grabbing her, twists her arm around behind her, growling into her ear.

PRESTON
How long have you been off the Dose?

She doesn't answer, shaking with emotion and anger.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Look at you.

He spins her around by her twisted arm to face an ornate UNREGISTERED MIRROR in the hall.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Look at you!

They both stand there, in the illegal mirror's reflection.

His face looking over her shoulder. And hers, flushed with emotion, strands of wavy dark hair drifting wildly into blazing eyes ... lips red, full ...

Preston catches himself *staring* at her ...

Abruptly, he releases her. Suddenly finding that he cannot hold her eyes any longer. All he can think to mumble is...

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Look at you ...

And leaving her in Brandt's custody, he abruptly turns and moves into the house. Brandt watches after him. Curiously.

34 INT. HOUSE - DAY

Preston moves through the house, searching, feeling ... Brandt trails with the captive woman and several officers.

PRESTON
You live here alone?

Fuming, she says nothing.

34 CONTINUED:

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Who else do you know who's ceased their interval?

WOMAN
Fuck you, how's that?

Preston just nods. He can play it that way too. He begins measuring off one of the walls with measured footsteps ....

35 INT. HALL - DAY

They follow him into the hall as he continues, measuring the wall as he goes ...

36 INT. ROOM - DAY

And into the next room where he wraps around the doorframe, measuring the distance to the wall. He turns to Brandt and the Woman. Looking at her particularly.

PRESTON
Interesting.

The Woman bitterly says nothing. Clearly there is more distance between the rooms than there is wall between them. Preston nods to the wall of the room.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Tear it down.

The Demolition Team jumps to it with jackhammers, knocking down the flimsy faux wall in a matter of seconds. A moment later, through a ragged hole, Preston steps into...

37 INT. ROOM - DAY

A HIDDEN ROOM. Instantly, the eye is assaulted with the uncustomary sensation of COLOR. THINGS, jumbled everywhere. Teddy Bears, pictures, paintings, posters, wall paper, collages, toys, upholstered furniture...

Everything that incites sensation, feeling, emotion. Everything we take for granted. Everything forbidden.

The collage of an entire life, stuffed into one tiny room.

The three of them, Preston, Brandt and the Woman - stand silently in the clearing dust.

WOMAN
(finally)
You're going to burn it, aren't you ...

37 CONTINUED:

PRESTON
Eventually. However, you couldn't have accumulated all this by yourself. It will all be sorted and examined. By means of clues and evidence - we'll discover who your confederates are.

The Woman stands there a stark moment, chest rising and falling ... Abruptly, she *grabs!* the gun of the nearest Enforcer and spins it around on Preston.

The Officer dives for her and Brandt's own gun snaps out.

But Preston *knocks!* Brandt aside even as his gun goes off, shot firing wide, punching a small hole into the beautiful, textured wallpaper.

There is a ringing moment. Then, regaining his feet, Brandt looks at Preston like he was crazy. Preston looks from the thwarted Woman sitting pinned against the wall, eyes afire, ... to Brandt.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
We need her.

... is all he can think to say. *

38 INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - HALL OF ENFORCEMENT - DAY

Preston sits across from the Woman in a windowless room.

PRESTON
Do you have a name?

She is silent. Staring stonily into the space between them.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
It doesn't matter, you know. You're to be taken to the Palace of Justice. I'm * sure you know that ... there, few * questions remain unanswered.

She remains mute, defiant.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
That ... fragrance. Why do you do it? Why do you put it on yourself?

She responds again with imperial silence. Reaching into the pocket of his coat, he removes - small, beautiful, ornate - an ART DECO PERFUME DECANTER, taken from her house.

He sets it between them.

38 CONTINUED:

Her eyes hold on it perhaps a millisecond too long. A beat. Preston pushes the small treasure across to her.

An instant of struggle. She takes it, cradling its familiar weight in her hands.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
What's your name?

She stares at the object in her hands another moment before drawing a deep breath.

WOMAN
O'Brien ... Mary.

PRESTON
Well Mary, you can either wait and tell the technicians at the Palace of Justice, or you can tell me now - who are your friends?

Her eyes rise. Looking back at him for the first time. Impossibly steady.

MARY
(finally)
I'm wondering - if you have any idea at all what that word means - 'friend'.

Preston tightens an imperceptible instant - Partridge coming back to him. His composure recrystallizes. *

PRESTON
There's nothing you don't feel?

She only looks back at him.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Guilt?

MARY
If I've done something wrong. I haven't.

PRESTON
You've taken it upon yourself to cease your interval. You've broken the law.

MARY
What law would that be? The law of nature says I should *feel*. That every atom, every molecule of me was *built* for it. It's a crime I don't use chemicals to crush myself?
(MORE)

38 CONTINUED: (2)

MARY (CONT'D)
To stop myself from feeling because you're afraid what I feel might be dangerous?

PRESTON
Excuse me, are you at all aware...

MARY
(stepping on him)
'Of the history of suffering grown out of the emotional nature of Man? The Manifest Doctrinals. Man's inhumanity to Man - all because he can hate and lust - rage, covet ... *

PRESTON
You speak as though it's somehow inaccurate. Do you deny he's tortured, mutilated his way through his existence? That until Equium genocide had been the very legend of Man? *

She is silent.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Look at you - a blister. Fear, anxiety - you *like* that - feeling?

She considers him a calm beat. Leans across the table.

MARY
Let me ask you something ...

And, startlingly, she reaches forward and *grasps* one of his hands into her own. Her eyes looking into his.

MARY (CONT'D)
Why are you *alive*?

Within Preston, for reasons he can't even understand, every atom of his being electrifies.

He quickly pulls his hand back from hers. *

PRESTON
I'm alive ... I live because ...

He hesitates again, finally managing ...

PRESTON (CONT'D)
As a cleric and citizen I have function.

MARY
What function?

38 CONTINUED: (3)

PRESTON
To ... safeguard the continuity of this, This Great Society. To serve Libria.

MARY
It's circular. You exist to continue your existence. What's the *point*?

He looks at her a long moment. *

PRESTON
What's the point of your existence?

MARY
To feel. Because you've never done it, you can never know it. But it's as vital as breath. And without it, without love, without anger, sorrow - breath is just a clock - ticking.

Preston considers her another long moment.

PRESTON
And you're willing, by virtue of your own selfishness, to be a seed in the downfall of a functioning society?

MARY
I'm willing to be a lot more than that, I can tell you. I'm willing to be the soil, the sun - the very water - if necessary. *

A flummoxed beat from Preston.

PRESTON
Then I have no choice but to remand you to the Palace of Justice for processing.

She sits back with a wry smile.

MARY
"Processing"? You mean execution don't you.

He looks back at her impassively across the table.

PRESTON
Processing.

39 INT. HALL OF EQUILIBRIUM - DAY

BRANDT stands impatiently in the long line to the dose window. He's got a ways to go and he's not happy about it. He stops a passing PROCTOR.

BRANDT
I was told the lines were short today.

PROCTOR
I'm sorry, Sir - there hasn't been less than an hour's wait all day.

He walks off, leaving Brandt watching after, a number of thoughts occurring behind his grey eyes.

40 INT. PRESTON'S QUARTERS - NIGHT *

Preston stands in the doorway of his children's room. They sleep peacefully in their separate beds within. *

He watches them sleep for a long time. And it strikes him - this is something he's never done before. *

*

41 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Stark, Preston faces himself in the mirror in his bathroom. *

His eyes fall on his DOSE CASE on the counter. *

Opening it, he removes the vial marked for this night.

Raising the small amber vial aloft to the dim bare bulb above, he stares up into its goldness. Long and deep. Lost in it.

Equium. *

Abruptly, for reasons he does not know, he puts it back in its case and, turning off the light, he exits to the bedroom.

42 INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

Preston awakens with a start. Heart pounding, face slickened with sweat. He had been dreaming. He looks around, chest rising and falling dramatically - confused. Panicked.

Raising his hand to his chest, he touches his breast bone. He can literally *feel* his heart pounding inside him. He has never felt these feelings ... any feelings.

42 CONTINUED:

Rising, he goes to the window, scratching away the thin, translucent paper that covers all windows in Libria.

He peers out across the stark, powerful geometry of Libria's rooftops where the light of the sun is breaking. Dawn.

43 EXT. ROOFTOP - DAWN

A few shoves and the unused rooftop door shudders open, allowing Preston onto the roof. He has never been up here before. No one has, really.

Drawn, he drifts towards the roof's edge. Staring out at the great red rim of the SUN as it rises above the horizon. He gazes, mesmerized, as though he had never seen it before.

And, in fact, maybe he hasn't. Not really ...

And it moves him. So much so that a TEAR breaks unprovoked out of his eye, rolling down his cheek. Trembling, his finger comes up to touch it. He looks at the unfamiliar moisture budded on his fingertip ...

Confused ... Mind beginning to turmoil ... Turning, he runs.

44 INT. STAIRWELL - DAWN

Tearing down the stairwell.

45 INT. PRESTON'S APARTMENT - DAWN

Bursting back into his cubicle. Only to encounter LISA headed down the hall from the bathroom. The girl turns, surprised to see her father framed in the doorway, panting.

LISA
Dad ... ?

Preston stares at the girl a moment, caught completely off guard, at a loss for words. Finally, he manages to get out:

PRESTON
Go back ... go back to bed ...

She holds on him a beat ... then, with a shrug, she does.

46 INT. BATHROOM - DAWN

He bursts into the bathroom, quickly closing the door and fumbling for his LIBRIUM CASE with shaking hands.

Getting it open, he snatches out the morning's dose, loading it into the pneumatic syringe as quickly as his trembling fingers can manage, *thrusting* it to his neck ...

46 CONTINUED:

But before he pushes the button that will release the soothing amber fluid into his carotid artery, and shut off this unendurable assault of emotion ...

He catches SIGHT of himself in the mirror. Haggard, pneumatic injector to his neck...

47 EXT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - MORNING

Preston stands with the hundreds of other morning commuters - waiting on the platform for the subway.

A hiss of hydraulics, the train pulls up and the crowd turns liquid - flowing in through the open doors. *

Preston is the last to board. A *cracking* sound from under his shoe as he steps off the platform and onto the train.

Two TINY GLASS VIALS left crushed and unnoticed on the concrete platform.

48 INT. SUBWAY - MORNING

The throng rides in ponderous silence. No person speaking, no person looking at any other. All just sitting in their unquestioned contentment.

All but PRESTON, whose eyes move secretly from face to face. From the elderly woman next to him. To the young man. To the pretty woman - drinking in their detail. Like a vampire.

Every wrinkle, every contour, the shape of each hand, the length of each eyelash never before noticed. Seeing for the first time beauty ... and ugliness. *Fascinated.*

49 EXT. SIDEWALK - MORNING

He walks through the morning throng - outwardly calm, emotionless - but inside, his heart a torrent of emotion, a veritable hurricane raging inside of him.

Making him for the first time unsure how to hold his body. Uncertain what to do with his eyes. Fearful at every instant that he will give himself away.

50 INT. NEWSPAPER STAND - MORNING

He seeks refuge at a newspaper stand. Relieved. Like a man hiding in plain sight, he picks up a paper and pretends to read - trying to calm his racing heart.

He risks a glance up. Finds himself staring into the eyes of another man at the stand - *staring* right back at him.

50 CONTINUED:

And in that instant, Preston knows. *This man is feeling too!* And it scares the *shit* out of him. Dropping the paper, he turns and walks away as quickly as he can.

51 EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Until he can stand it no longer - and his retreating stride disintegrates into a run. He runs. And runs. Pinballing through the crowd, people turning after him as he passes ...

52 EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Finally finding a breathless, heart-pounding refuge in a grim alley. He buries his face in his hands - tormented by a thousand colliding emotions.

Then, suddenly, everything comes welling up inside him. He VOMITS forcefully onto the alley floor. Remaining there, shaking, choking.

53 INT. HALL OF ENFORCEMENT - MORNING

Like a shattered puzzle, Preston has tentatively pieced his composure back together. He steps into the busy station.

OFFICER
Good morning Cleric.

Preston manages a tight, curt nod as he passes.

PRESTON
Good morning ...

The Officer glances up, looking after him a curious moment.

54 INT. CLERIC DESKS - DAY

Preston sits at his desk. Heart still pounding like a jackhammer.

His eyes fall on the desk. Seeing it for the first time as ... uninspired. Things placed in perfect order, yes ... but not ... inspired.

Without even realizing it, he begins rearranging the items on it. Rearranging them to suit, well ... his inclination.

Turning the stapler at an angle, putting the paperclip holder, the phone, slightly askew.

VOICE
What are you doing?

Preston looks sharply up. BRANDT stands there, eying him.

54 CONTINUED:

BRANDT
(repeats)
What are you doing?

PRESTON
I'm ... rearranging my desk.

Brandt stands there the slightest instant - considering him.

BRANDT
You didn't like the way it was before?

Preston looks back at the other man. Is he testing him?

PRESTON
I had no feelings about it. I'm merely attempting to optimize.

Brandt continues looking at him another moment. Then nods, tossing a square of paper onto the desk. *

BRANDT
Sense Offenders. Holed up in the Nether. *

55 EXT. HOUSE - THE NETHER - DAY *

CHAOS. Madness. GUNSHOTS. Screams.
An overgrown but quaint house in the Nether. *

56 INT. HOUSE -DAY

It is absolute insanity as the Enforcement Teams fight their way through the dark twisting shadows of the house, trying to take it hall by hall like a street fire-fight.

Their gunfire is returned, muzzle-flashes in smoke. Brandt, ducking behind a wall, yells to Preston a few feet to the rear.

BRANDT
I'm going to go! Cover me!

Abruptly, a **MAN**, a Sense Offender, comes flying around the corner, SCREAMING like a banshee, waving a gun. He slams past Brandt and runs right into Preston's arms.

BLAM! Brandt's gun barks and the man goes limp in Preston's grasp. His fading eyes connecting with Preston's as he slides lifeless down his torso ...

Preston stares at the dead man in his arms. Then looks, astonished, to Brandt who nods.

56 CONTINUED:

BRANDT (CONT'D)
Good grab, Cleric.

And, with a yell, he steps around the corner shooting - several Enforcement units blazing away with him.

Preston is left alone - in the ringing aftermath. Realizing he still holds the dead man. Looking into a face that, moments before, *felt*. Like him ...

He quickly releases the body.

His hands. Covered in blood. Blinking rapidly. Deeply, conflicted, confused.

57 INT. HOUSE - DAY

The gunfire and screams are gone but for the echoes now. Every shot needed, has been fired. Every scream, silenced.

Now Preston does his work. Wandering through the house alone. Searching. Smelling out *that* place ...

He fixes on a wall. Approaching it, he scratches at the plaster with a fingernail. It crumbles away easily and, a moment later, he is stepping into a HIDDEN ROOM.

Instantly, the eye is assaulted with the uncustomary sensation of COLOR. THINGS, jumbled everywhere. Pictures, paintings, posters, wall paper, collages, toys, upholstered furniture...

He looks around ...

An old Singer sewing machine. A work of art, really. He picks up an embroidered pillow - "Bless this Mess" Tacky, yes, but to eyes hungry for human expression, the highest art.

He allows his hand to run along the edge of a long, ornately carved table as he moves slowly through the room - past the framed pictures of unrelated people, long dead.

Stopping at a BOOK. A CHILD'S BOOK OF VERSE. Picking it up, he opens it randomly, reading ... *

PRESTON
'Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary . . .'

He blinks, eyes losing momentary focus at the name's associations.

He shakes it off, eyes catching something else. On the FLOOR in the center of the room. Something. A slight, almost unnoticeable BULGE beneath the shag carpet ...

57 CONTINUED:

Bending, he runs his fingers across it.

VOICE
So this is it.

He looks sharply up. BRANDT stands there - surveying the cornucopia of memorabilia that is the room.

Preston quickly straightens.

PRESTON
Looks like it.

He takes one last look at the room. Then turns to the CONFLAGRATION TEAMS hustling up behind Brandt.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Burn it.

And as he steps out - they do. Blasting the room with incinerating flame.

58 EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Brandt works on paperwork on the hood of the car while Preston watches the house burn. Even the flames are beautiful to him now.

BRANDT
Why didn't you just leave it for the Coflagration Team . . .

Preston looks over at him - surprised - what? Brandt nods to Preston's COAT POCKET. Preston looks down to see the top of A CHILD'S BOOK OF VERSE peeking out.

He is shocked, not even having realized that he had unconciously taken it ...

PRESTON
Oh I ...

He tries at something approaching a smile.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
I would have. But, as you know, we're required to log one item from each A&R into Evidentiary Storage.

Brandt holds on him an instant. Then shrugs, returning to his paperwork. Reflectively ...

58 CONTINUED:

BRANDT
Do you know - it's the law of diminishment, Preston - if we keep burning this contraband - one day there simply won't be any of it left.

He looks up again, as if sobered by the thought.

BRANDT (CONT'D)
What will be left - for men like you and me?

There is a profound beat between them - oddly uncomfortable.

Abruptly an OFFICER comes flying around the burning house.

ENFORCER
Hey! Got something out back!

When Brandt looks back, Preston is handing him his gun from off the hood.

PRESTON
Your firearm, Cleric - it may prove useful.

Brandt looks at him an odd instant - then takes it.

59 EXT. KENNEL - DAY

Preston and Brandt stand with the Enforcement teams outside the fence of a KENNEL. More than a dozen DOGS of every description within, baying at the burning house.

BRANDT
(shakes head)
This isn't the first time we've seen this. Why do they do it? Why do they keep these animals?
(looks to Preston)
Do they eat them?

PRESTON
I couldn't tell you.

ENFORCEMENT
What should we do, Sir?

BRANDT
Exterminate them, of course.

59 CONTINUED:

The Enforcer racks back the bolt on his repeating rifle and, opening the gate, starts to step in. Involuntarily, Preston opens his mouth to speak.

BRANDT (CONT'D)
(raising hand)
Wait ...
(Preston)
What is it, Cleric?

Preston struggles for a moment, against what not even he knows or understands ... then shakes his head.

PRESTON
Nothing ...

Brandt nods to the Enforcer and the report of the rifle fills the air, mingled with the screams of the dogs.

Amidst the carnage, SOMETHING scrambling between the Enforcer's legs catches Preston's eyes.

He grabs it as it scurries out the open gate, trying to escape. Hefts it up into his arms.

A PUPPY. Scared eyes, short murky-tan fur. The thing is *shaking* with fear.

ENFORCER
Toss it back in, Sir - I'll finish it off.

Preston doesn't move. Everyone looks at him.

BRANDT
Toss it back in - he'll finish it.

Preston hesitates. Starts to hand the puppy back in the enclosure. The Enforcer reaches for it ...

But Preston pulls it back.

PRESTON
It ... it seems to me that at least one of these animals ought to be tested for disease.

He is barely able to contain the nervous quaver in his voice and even less able to hold anyone's eyes. He covers for it by turning immediately and starting back for the cars.

Tossing back over his shoulder ...

59 CONTINUED: (2)

PRESTON (CONT'D)
If there's an epidemic in the Nether, it would be better if we knew about it.

Brandt and the Enforcers exchange a glance. The Enforcer just shrugs and returns to perfunctorily *Pow! Pow!* administering coup de graces to the dying animals.

But Brandt watches carefully after his partner; walking away with a puppy held tight in his arms.

60 INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

Preston climbs into the back of the car. He closes his eyes a moment, puppy in his lap, trying to still his pounding heart.

VOICE
Cleric ...

Preston's eyes pop open - connecting in the rear-view mirror with the eyes of the DRIVER of the car. He hadn't even realized he was there.

But not seeming to realize anything is amiss, the man holds up the RADIO HANDSET.

ENFORCER
Congratulations. The sense offender you arrested - Mary O'Brien ...

He looks into the back seat - the faintest ghost of a smile.

ENFORCER (CONT'D)
She's been sentenced to death.

Preston blinks back at him a start microsecond. Finds it in himself to say ...

PRESTON
Good.

61 INT. ENFORCEMENT PARKING LOT - DAY - OMIT

62 INT. POLICE EVIDENTIARY STORAGE - DAY

Face a mask, Preston stops at the counter.

PRESTON
Confiscated evidence for X23-T45 ...

He has to cough to cover his nervousness.

62 CONTINUED:

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Mary O'Brien ...

63 INT. EMPTY ROOM - DAY

Preston sits in front of the BOX of objects confiscated from Mary's home. Contemplating it, almost fearfully.

Finally, with fingers that nearly tremble, he opens the box, picking out a bit of RIBBON. Nothing really. Something you or I would cast out without a second thought. *

But it captivates him. Staring into its crimson depths, feeling its supple pliancy.

Putting it down, he pulls out her ART DECO PERFUME DECANTER. As he turns it in his hands, the cut glass splits the light, creating a rainbow inside its diamond facets.

Tentatively, he sprays a tiny bit it into his palm and breathes it. Instantly, the fragrance possesses him.

He inhales it into his very essence.

64 EXT. PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY

Preston stands in front of the gargantuan gauntness of the Palace of Justice. Not knowing why he's here. Not quite comprehending these forces that have driven him ...

65 INT. SECURITY HUB - DAY

Preston stands beside the SECURITY TECHNICIANS. Staring at one of the many video monitors. MARY sits in her cell.

He gazes long into her pensive features. Finally, shaking it off, he speaks to the security technicians.

PRESTON
I want to interrogate her.

SECURITY TECHNICIAN
All the interrogation cells are in use, Sir.

He indicates a bank of surveillance monitors. On each, a prisoner sits being interrogated. EXCEPT ONE, which is empty.

PRESTON
What about that one? Room 101.

SECURITY TECHNICIAN
The microphones won't be up in that room until next week.

65 CONTINUED:

PRESTON
Put us in there.

SECURITY TECHNICIAN
But Sir ...

Preston turns sharply on the man - eyes burning with all the gravity of the TetraGrammaton.

PRESTON
My timeframe dictates that I cannot wait.
I said *put* us in there.

The Security Technician gulps back any argument.

SECURITY TECHNICIAN
By all means, Sir - Room 101.

66 INT. ROOM 101 - DAY

A windowless room. Preston sits across from MARY. All trace of his inner turmoil - hidden away.

For her part, she looks as though she has been knocked around a bit. She considers him a mildly curious moment.

MARY
I can't say I'm not surprised to see you.

Preston swallows invisibly.

PRESTON
I don't see why. My interrogation of you isn't fully concluded.

Her eyes search him for another instant.

MARY
And, after all, time's so very short now, isn't it?

Her death sentence. Through an act of will, he manages to hold her eyes. She smiles to herself.

Then, something, some fissure, cracks behind her hard facade and her hand reaches for her eyes.

But just as quickly, she wipes it away, drawing a crisp breath - defiant again.

MARY (CONT'D)
Ask your questions. Then leave.

66 CONTINUED:

But, Preston is unprepared. He'd come only because he wanted, he *needed* to see her. *

PRESTON
Well ... the ... resistance ...

MARY
The technicians already asked me that. If there were a resistance, I guess I would have told them, wouldn't I? So why don't you get to the point and tell me why you're really here.

He holds on her another moment. He can't possibly tell her that he is here because he felt irresistibly *drawn* here.

PRESTON
When you ... first went off the dose, surely you ... surely it was hard. There must have been ... doubts.

She looks back at him a coldly curious moment.

MARY
Why do you care?

PRESTON
I don't.

MARY
Then why ask?

PRESTON
I'm just trying to understand ... people like you ...

She holds on him, studying him like an insect.

MARY
Of course it was hard. It's a withdrawal. It's a drug. You get through it by thinking about the people who put it in you.

Preston looks at her - trying hard to comprehend.

PRESTON
... you mean ... hate ...

She says nothing - looking back most particularly at *him.*

PRESTON (CONT'D)
But they're only trying to help. Human nature, it can be so ...

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED: (2)

MARY
Uncooperative?

There is an ironic half-twist in her smile.

MARY (CONT'D)
Well we can't have that, can we? If someone's coloring outside the lines, by all means, medicate them. Right back into conformity. *

She smiles with everything but her eyes. Preston stares. *

MARY (CONT'D)
'Cause if that doesn't work - there's always witches in Salem.

Preston stares. Deeply stirred by this amazing woman.

MARY (CONT'D)
Mind if I ask you a personal question?

An invisible swallow. He nods.

MARY (CONT'D)
Do you find me attractive?

Startled, Preston's eyes blink away for the thinnest fraction of an instant. Then back.

PRESTON
I'm not - entirely sure what you mean.

Her eyes search his for a moment. Then, discovering no fragment of life, she sits back. *

MARY
You see?

66A INT. CLERIC MONASTERY - DAY *

PRESTON stops on the second floor promenade overlooking a great moasterial training floor where the ranks of two dozen black-clad CLERIC CADETS practice an unusual MARTIAL KATA. * * *

DUPONT walks - LECTURING - through their practicing ranks. *

DUPONT *
Through analysis of thousands of recorded * gunfights, the Cleric has determined that * the geometric distribution of antagonists * in any gun battle is a statistically * predictable element ... *

(CONTINUED)

66A CONTINUED:

He turns thoughtfully at the end of a row of cadets.

DUPONT (CONT'D)
Over the decades, in accordance with this revolutionary precept, the Grammaton has developed and refined what have come to be known as the Gun Katas.

He nods, the slightest smile - a subject he never tires of.

DUPONT (CONT'D)
By the rote mastery of this art your firing efficiency will rise by no less than 120 percent. No longer taking the time to spot and target your attackers, your mortal kill ratio will drop on average of 27 percent. The difference, however, of a 63 percent increased lethal proficiency - makes the master of the gun katas an adversary not to be taken lightly.

He stops as his eyes fall on Preston, watching from the gallery ...

67 INT. GALLERY - CLERIC MONASTERY - DAY

Preston and Dupont walk the somber, echoing gallery -sounds of the cadets practicing the gun katas echoing around them.

DuPont is peruses MARY'S FILE as they walk.

DUPONT
I don't think I quite comprehend your request, Cleric.

PRESTON
It's just, Sir, that her execution date has been set. I believe she still has information about the Resistance that could be valuable to the Council.

DUPONT
But she's already been clinically interrogated, correct?

PRESTON
Yes, but I ... I believe that somehow she has been able to resist; that her character is such that ... that ...

He falters.

67 CONTINUED:

PRESTON (CONT'D)
It's difficult to explain.

DuPont holds on him an instant. Turns to MARY'S PHOTO in the file. Darkly beautiful. His eyes rise back to Preston.

DUPONT
Pretty ...

Preston barely manages to conceal the confused rush he feels at those words.

PRESTON
I ... don't fully grasp the reference.

DuPont holds on him another steady beat. Then nods, closing the file as they stop, looking out at the KATA FLOOR. *

DUPONT
Do you know of the Shao Lin ... or perhaps the Mamelukes, Preston?

PRESTON
No Sir - I do not.

DUPONT
In a time of a land called Arabia, the Mameluke were a caste of warrior monks. Selected and castrated at birth; trained * to be the greatest fighting slaves ever known. Existing entirely above the move and sway of common passion.

He is quiet, thoughtful a moment.

DUPONT (CONT'D)
Like you Preston.

Then, faintly sad, he nods.

DUPONT (CONT'D)
Like me.

Preston looks at him, startled.

DUPONT (CONT'D)
You're surprised? All the High Coucil, * even Father himself, is drawn from the Cleric.

He gazes again down at the practicing cadets.

67 CONTINUED: (2)

DUPONT (CONT'D)
Tell me what you know of him, Preston, of Father...

PRESTON
Only what everyone knows. That he is the foremost Citizen. The very model of the insensate ideal.

He swallows.

PRESTON
That he is everywhere and nowhere. But that the threat of assassination from underground forces him to remain hidden.

He looks down, feeling a pit inside him ...

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Even so, such is his empathy that he risks daily pilgrimages to the Palace of Justice to witness the combustion of the accused - that he might continually test his unemotionality.

DUPONT
Do you know why, Preston?

Preston hesitates for another instant, feeling his insides twist. Then regurgitates the rote dogma that has been the boilerplate of his entire existence.

PRESTON
Because only such a person can we be confident will rule without the interference of his passions. Because only with such a man may we rest knowing he will not be reduced to tyranny by mere emotion.

DUPONT
And yet - yet there are elements in this society, secretly banned together, secretly feeling, who would tear down all he has accomplished and surrender it back to exactly that - the tyranny of emotion.

He pauses, paradoxically impassioned a moment. Then calms.

67 CONTINUED: (3)

DUPONT (CONT'D)
Even knowing that, Cleric, it is his uncompromising example we must continue to uphold. We cannot bend our own laws, we cannot compromise our ideals.

He looks very particularly at Preston.

DUPONT (CONT'D)
We can beat this underground. We can beat it without entering into league with Sense Offenders, can't we, Preston?

Preston tenses as it hits him what the other man's saying.

DUPONT (CONT'D)
Let's show them that we are what we mean. Let's burn this woman, this Sense Offender. Let's burn her and break them anyway.

He abruptly takes Preston's hand with missionary zeal.

DUPONT (CONT'D)
Because the Council's been watching you Preston and we believe you can do it. The only question is will you? Will you be Father's pure weapon against the Resistance. The instrument of the State, for the State. Will you find them? Will you break them? For the Council. For Father. For me.

Preston wavers - twisting to near-breaking inside. But ultimately, has no choice but to say:

PRESTON
It would ... be the greatest honor.

68 INT. PRESTON'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Preston sits, his children studying by television light in the background - his eyes distant and out of focus. Hand in his left pocket ...

Feeling the RED RIBBON.

69 EXT. GATE 17-E - NIGHT

He sits idling in his car at one of the great gates to the Nether. The soldier on duty returns from the guardhouse and hands his identification back through the window.

69 CONTINUED:

SOLDIER
Thank you, Sir. Good hunting.

PRESTON
Yes. Thank you.

He drives on.

70 INT. BRANDT'S CAR - NIGHT

BRANDT watches from his own car as Preston, whom he followed, drives through the gate into the Nether. Watching. Thinking. *

71 EXT. GATE - NIGHT

Pulling up to the gate, Brandt flashes his identification.

BRANDT
Cleric. I need to pass right away.

The soldier takes his I.D., examining it.

SOLDIER
You're second class - not authorized for solo excursions into the Nether. *

BRANDT
Dammit, this is essential Clerical business! I have to pass now!

The Soldier straightens, putting his hand on his rifle.

SOLDIER
You lack authorization. Under no circumstances will you be allowed to pass through this gate.

Brandt sees that this man means what he says. His eyes shift to the ominous white-clad SWEEPER CREW posted by their tanker * just on the other side of the gate.

He snaps his eyes back to the soldier.

BRANDT
Tell the captain of the Sweeper Crew I need to speak to him immediately.

72 EXT. CURB - BURNED-OUT HOUSE - NIGHT *

Parked at the curb in front of the HOUSE he condemned to be * burned to the ground this morning, Preston opens his TRUNK. *

Inside is the PUPPY. *

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED:

Setting his overcoat down, he hefts the dog out, placing him down on the pavement.

PRESTON
Okay you're ... back home now. You're ... free so ... go ...

The dog looks at him curiously.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Go on ... I mean ... you know ... go.

He makes a go-ing motion with his hands. The puppy regards him another instant. Then, with what amounts to a dog-shrug, turns and noses off.

Preston turns too, looking up at the dark remains of the house.

73 INT. BURNED-OUT HOUSE - NIGHT

He haunts through the house's burned-out shell. Finds his way into what was the secret room - now nothing more than a charred skeleton of studs.

Flicking on his flashlight, he sweeps the floor until he finds what he is looking for. The carpet has been burned away now and the TRAP DOOR he felt there this morning, is exposed.

Sweeping aside the ashes, he pulls the door open and shines his light down inside.

74 INT. SECRET CHAMBER - NIGHT

He descends into the dark sub-terrestrial room. His light sweeps across a LANTERN. Setting the PUPPY down, he turns it on, filling the SMALL ROOM with its golden illumination.

What he sees nearly takes his breath away. Like Midas' treasure trove, the room, untouched by the fire, is simply *jammed* with memorabilia.

Photos, baseball cards, a train set, the complete works of William Shakespeare, a Clown painting, a book of quotations, a box filled with costume jewelry, an old Victrola.

A kid in a candy store, he walks the tiny dimensions, savoring each step, running his fingers over every object.

Picks up a half-consumed pack of WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT GUM. Turns it over in his hands. Un-peels a stick, pushes it tentatively into his mouth. Chews ... smiles ...

74 CONTINUED:

Moves on to the Victrola. Beside it, in their wax wrappers, some OLD RECORDS.

He shakes one out. Examines it. He's not quite sure, but it's pretty evident that it goes with the Victrola. He mouths the words on the label ...

PRESTON
RCA Symphony No. 9, D minor, opus 125...
Ludwig van Beet ... hoven ...

It means nothing to him. He puts the record on the player. It doesn't take him but an instant to figure it out. Placing the needle on the vinyl platter, he cranks the crank.

It cracks and pops as the record goes round unevenly for a moment ... and then, issuing from the horn, something he has never in his life heard before.

Music. And not just music, but the most heartfelt, profoundly created music ever made. The very soul of mankind rent open, bleeding forth melody ...

Preston's throat knots as the first notes of the bassoon distantly sound, building ... mounting ...

And it only gets worse from there. After a moment, he must sit, he has begun to shake so badly.

Helpless in its spell, he can only listen, astonished, as the towering magnificence of the first movement washes over him.

It is unfair, that music which moves even the most hardened human soul should be the first heard by this defenseless man.

Tears flow unblocked down his face as he realizes for the first time, all at once, what are death, life and love.

75 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Strains of the symphony still echoing in his ears, Preston walks back out to his car. He pauses before getting in.

PRESTON
Beet-hoven.

A small bark! *snaps* his eyes round. THE PUPPY stands at his feet - wagging its tail.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Go on ... go on ... get away ... go ...

The Puppy whimpers.

75 CONTINUED:

PRESTON (CONT'D)
I ... I can't take you with me. I can't.
... you have to understand that.

The dog doesn't - whimpering again. Stand-off. Resolving himself, Preston steps over the dog and gets into the car.

75A INT. CAR - NIGHT

But as he puts his hand on the key to turn the ignition, he stops - closing his eyes.

Shakes his head. Damn!

With a sigh, he gets back out.

75B EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Where he confronts the puppy once more.

PRESTON
I can't take you with me, I simply can't.
Why can't you understand that?? What is
so hard to understand about that??

The dog wags its tail. Preston closes his eyes a moment. Deep breath ... holds it ... lets it out.

Scoops up the puppy ...

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Fine, but you're riding in the trunk ...

Going round, he opens the trunk and unceremoniously dumps the dog in.

Is about to peremptorily slam the lid shut but the dog climbs up - clearly looking for attention.

Preston hesitates. Feeling something pulling inside him. He has never touched another creature in anything other than aggression before ...

The dam breaks. Reaching out, his fingers come down ...

And TOUCH the dog's fur, fingers running through its silken softness, feeling its warmth, it's life ...

ELECTRONIC VOICE
Step away from the vehicle!

The world *bursts into blinding white light.*

75B CONTINUED:

Shielding his eyes, Preston rises to see approaching down the street a SWEEPER TANKER, it's rack of roof-mounted XENON LIGHTS turning night into day. *

MEGAPHONE
Step away from the vehicle!

Preston, heart stalled, can only stare at it, coming at him.

MEGAPHONE (CONT'D)
This will be your final warning! Step away from the vehicle! *

Subtly shutting the trunk, Preston obeys. With a hiss of pneumatics, the Sweeper Tanker stops a dozen yards away. *

Shotguns at the ready, THREE SWEEPERS step out. *

SWEEPER LEAD
Hands above your head.

Preston's raises his hands.

SWEEPER LEAD (CONT'D)
Identification.

PRESTON
I'm a Cleric. I'm here on official business.

SWEEPER LEAD
Identification.

Preston reaches inside his jacket. Feels for it. *But it's not there.* He blinks, FLASHING BACK...

To *putting his overcoat* in the TRUNK. *

His eyes snap back. The Sweepers' shotguns are on him. He swallows ...

PRESTON
I don't have it ...

SWEEPER LEAD
Unidentified individuals found in the Nether are subject to summary destruction. *

The other two sweepers tighten their grips on their guns.

75B CONTINUED: (2)

PRESTON
(steady)
You'd be making a very big mistake. I'm a Grammaton Cleric, first class.

The Sweeper Lead holds on him an instant - debating.

SWEEPER LEAD
We're going to search your vehicle.

Preston's eyes flicker to the trunk.

PRESTON
You're wasting your time. There's nothing in it and I have essential places to be.

Stepping forward, the Sweeper Lead wrests Preston's GUN from inside his coat and steps back. Covering him, he nods sharply to the other two who immediately begin searching through the car interior with flashlights.

After a moment, they emerge. Shake their heads. Nothing. Sweeper Lead turns back to Preston.

SWEEPER LEAD
The keys for the trunk.

Tight-lipped, Preston holds on him for an instant.

PRESTON
I'm trying to tell you - I have a pre-dawn combustion to witness. My timeframe dictates that I cannot wait.

Stepping forward, the Sweeper snatches the keys out of Preston's hand and tosses them to the searching sweepers.

Preston sucks in a deep, quiet breath. Holds it. One of them inserts the key into the trunk. Struggling with it ...

It *clicks* open ...

SWEEPER LEAD
Wait ...

Hands on the opening trunk-lid, the two searchers stop. The Sweeper Lead is studying Preston's face, illuminated for the first time in the beam of his shotgun's riot-light.

His gun's barrel drops as he realizes ...

SWEEPER LEAD (CONT'D)
Cleric Preston - I'm sorry, I ... I didn't recognize you.
(MORE)

75B CONTINUED: (3)

SWEEPER LEAD (CONT'D)
(quickly/Sweepers)
Stand off. It's all right.

Leaving the keys dangling in the lock, they do. Stepping back from the car. Fireworks of relief go off inside Preston.

SWEEPER LEAD (CONT'D)
You understand, Sir, in this light, it's extremely difficult ...

From his vantage, Preston can *see* the dog through the four inches of open trunk. He manages a nod.

PRESTON
You're just doing your job.

SWEEPER LEAD
Yes Sir. Thank you for appreciating that, Sir. We'll escort you back to the gate.

PRESTON
That would be good, thank you.
(as the Sweepers turn)
And my sidearm?

SWEEPER LEAD
(turning back)
Ah - yes Sir, sorry Sir.

He starts to hand the gun back to Preston when a small canine *WHIMPER* from the direction of the car snaps all heads round.

Preston's heart stops. All eyes come back to him.

PRESTON
An animal ... The Nether's full of them ...

He reaches for his gun but the Sweeper Lead *pulls* it back, looking at him through narrow eyes.

SWEEPER LEAD
It sounded like it came from your car ...

PRESTON
Impossible. Now, if you'll return my firearm, I'll be on my way.

But the Sweeper Lead only holds on him another dark moment.

Then striding over to the car, he *throws* open the trunk, his flashlight illuminating the PUPPY, panting in its beam.

(CONTINUED)

75B CONTINUED: (4)

All heads snap towards Preston. Instantly the two SWEEPERS step in on either side of him, shotguns aimed at his head.

SHOTGUN SWEEPER
On your knees! Get on your knees!

Preston exhibits less emotion now than he has since he went off Equium. Pulse flat-lining, he doesn't move.

SWEEPER LEAD
Get on your knees - now!!!

Preston's hands *shoot* up, grasping the shotgun barrels at either side of his head. A startled beat ...

... as the Sweeper Lead realizes what's just happened. That they have just made the mortal error ...

... of engaging a Grammaton Cleric ...

... without first calling for back-up.

SWEEPER LEAD (CONT'D)
Do it! Do it! Shoot him now!

The Sweepers yank back on their triggers - but Preston, knowing their movements before even they do, is a micro-second ahead, *shoving* back the pump-actions of their guns ...

Sending each gun's shell *ejecting* cartwheeling unfired upwards into the darkness ...

In the instant that follows - one in which they are too astonished to react ...

Preston *spins*, whipping them around 180 degrees by their guns, *racking* their pump-actions as he does, chambering the next shell and *yanking* the guns FIRING across his body.

Blowing the faceplates out of their helmets like black water.

Even as they drop, he rolls the shotguns over his wrists and, dropping down to one knee, *fires* both barrels at the Sweeper Lead even as that man shoots - shot going wild.

Dropping the shotguns, Preston rolls forward, snatching up his Grammaton sidearm as he hits his feet and *POW! firing* simultaneously with the Sweeper Lead's next shot ...

BULLETS exploding in collision in the air between them.

BLABLAM! Preston's next shot, a nano-second behind the first, blows the Sweeper Lead off his feet.

75B CONTINUED: (5)

Preston stops, breathing now in the empty silence of the Nether and the hot white light of the xenons. *

Sick, deadly sick inside.

76 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Head in his hands, Preston sits in the dark at the bedside of the SLEEPING FORMS of his children - ROBBIE and LISA.

So many conflicting, painful things rushing through him.

His son lies there, severe and perfect, even in sleep. Lisa, just a seven year-old girl - features abandoned as her sleeping mind wanders distant realms ...

Quietly, Preston opens the drawer beside Robbie's bed. With a penlight, he illuminates its contents. Finds what he is looking for. ROBBIE'S DOSE CASE.

Silently he opens it, locating the following day's doses...

VOICE
What are you doing?

He snaps the penlight up, startled to find his ten year-old's eagle-eyes staring back at him through its beam.

ROBBIE
I said what are you doing?

Preston's heart pounds.

PRESTON
I . . .

He stares back at his son. Robbie sits upright in bed, eyes narrowing. Preston swallows deeply.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
I was checking. To make sure you've been taking your interval.

Robbie looks back at him a moment. Then relaxes. Nodding.

ROBBIE
And you're satisfied?

Preston holds on him an instant - then manages a curt nod.

PRESTON
I am. *

Robbie nods too - pleased.

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

ROBBIE
Good night then, Father.

PRESTON
Good night ... Son.

The boy puts his head back on his pillow and closes his eyes. Preston closes the young man's dose case, looks at him one last instant ... and walks out.

77 EXT. NETHER - NIGHT

LIGHTS FLASHING, dozens of Enforcement units are gathered in the street beside the dead bodies of the SWEEPER TEAM.

Among the Enforcement units on the crime scene, BRANDT considers the dark remains of the house whose burning he participated in that morning.

All a bit too much of a coincidence. He turns to an ENFORCER working on a MOBILE COMPUTING UNIT on the hood of a car.

BRANDT
Can you run a trace on the movements of a Cleric's sidearm tonight through that thing?

ENFORCER
No Sir. Only the Council has access to gun tracking.

Brandt purses his lips, thwarted for the moment. Then nods.

BRANDT
I want ballistics performed on the artifacts removed from these bodies. I want the results compared against the gun records of the Cleric.

The Enforcer looks shocked at the implication of this. But the look in Brandt's black eyes leaves him no doubt other than that the man is deadly serious.

78 INT. CORRIDOR - MORNING

When Preston exits his cubicle, he is surprised by a PAIR OF SWEEPERS marching towards him down the corridor.

SWEEPER
Cleric John Preston ...

He freezes, heart STOPPING ... But all they say is ...

78 CONTINUED:

SWEEPERS
Good morning, Sir.

As they march past, continuing down the hall. He stares after them, heart beating again - pounding. Just a patrol.

Opening his hand, he looks at his MORNING'S UNUSED EQUIUM. Ready to be disposed of in the subway or garage.

Palm bruised, he had gripped it so hard.

Had they searched him, he would have been dead.

79 INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Heart pounding, Preston pulls the mirror away from the wall. Behind it, a narrow cavity in the wall.

He hesitates an instant ...

Then drops the amber ampule into the cavity and pushes the mirror back in place.

80 EXT. SIDEWALK - MORNING - OMIT

81 INT. CLERIC MONASTERY - KATA FLOOR - DAY

The one place Preston can find peace, the room to think ...

He stands alone in the middle of the empty floor of the Cleric Monastery gallery, practicing ORIENTAL SWORD KATAS with a wooden sword.

He moves through the fluid sweeping, slashing motions with tremendouse grace, power and speed - mind focused - far away.

CLACK! as he turns, his sword suddenly strikes WOOD. BRANDT, in workout gear, stands opposite him - a bamboo practice sword of his own gripped in two hands - thin smile on his lips.

BRANDT
Always practicing, Cleric - I expect that's why you're the best.

A beat from Preston. Then he nods ...

PRESTON
That. Or maybe I'm just ... better.

Brandt's smile fades. He attacks - pressing Preston driving back with a slashing assault with the wooden sword.

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED:

He breathlessly speaks as he presses his advantage... *

BRANDT *
Everything... all right, Cleric? *

Preston slashes back - turning the direction of the battle. *

PRESTON
Of course ... why do you ask?

BRANDT
*
You've got ... a lot on your mind. *

Preston hesitates, defending a flurry of blows. *

PRESTON
What makes you ... say that? *

Faintly, Brandt smiles as he fights. *

BRANDT
You forget - the intuitive arts, Cleric.
It's my job to know what you're thinking.

Preston looks back at him - manages a smile of his own.

PRESTON
So then - what am I thinking?

Brandt looks back at him.

BRANDT
You're thinking about the murders in the
zone last night.

The smile drops off Preston's face.

BRANDT (CONT'D)
You're wondering ... if they know who did
it yet.

Preston is frozen.

BRANDT (CONT'D)
Tell me, Cleric, am I ... *close*?

Preston swallows. Nods.

PRESTON
Not bad. So ... do they? Know?

81 CONTINUED: (2)

BRANDT
Oh, there's theories. I have one or two of my own. But at the moment they're...

He looks at Preston. Deeply, deeply ...

BRANDT (CONT'D)
... premature.
(abruptly)
And in any case - I'm glad it happened.

Preston looks back at him - feeling a chill.

PRESTON
Why ...

BRANDT
Because now Father's decreed an acceleration in the crackdown on offenders.

He shrugs.

BRANDT (CONT'D)
Whoever did it - all they accomplished was a quicker end to the Resistance.

He looks at Preston - that ghost of a smile again.

BRANDT (CONT'D)
It's going to be a massacre.

82 *MONTAGE:*

Under the allegro assai of the 4th movement of Beethoven's 9th, the carnage of the day. With military precision, Shock Troops converge in the street outside an abandoned factory...

Guns firing ...

Windows exploding, plaster flying ...

Suspected offenders, running, crumpling, dying ...

And Preston, drifting through the chaos - stunned, horrified.

At the events. At his participation in them.

And in his background, BRANDT, watching him always.

83 INT. VIDEO-CHAMBER - DAY

Preston, in a special TELE-CHAMBER at Cleric Headquarters, faces an enormous SCREEN that projects DuPont's face.

83 CONTINUED:

DUPONT'S IMAGE
I don't quite follow your logic, Cleric.

Preston is pale, barely able to conceal the fact that he is trembling.

PRESTON
They were unarmed, Sir. Not providing resistance. Yet instead of apprehension for interrogation and process they were slaughtered.

DUPONT'S IMAGE
But Cleric, given the circumstances of last night, Father has decreed that there will be no more process for Sense Offenders - they are to either be shot on sight or incinerated without trial.

Preston is desperate.

PRESTON
But it's *counter* to law. You're a member of the Council ... *

DUPONT'S IMAGE
(cutting him off/annoyed) *
It is not the will of the Council, it is the will of Father and he *is* law, Preston. *

Preston stares back at him.

PRESTON
Sir - without the logic of process - is it not just ... mayhem? What we've tried so hard to eradicate?

DuPont's image tightens - becoming intimate.

DUPONT'S IMAGE
You must understand, Preston - while you and even I may not always agree with it, it is not the message that's important; it's our obedience to it. Father's will.

He shakes his head.

DUPONT'S IMAGE (CONT'D)
It may be hard, even counter-intuitive at times - but the point is the test. Call it faith. You ... have it, I assume ... *

83 CONTINUED: (2)

Preston stares back at him for the thinnest instant as he reaches some inner resolve. Then:

PRESTON
Yes. I have it.

DUPONT'S IMAGE
Good.

Preston struggles within again for the tiniest instant.

PRESTON
Sir ...

DUPONT'S IMAGE
Yes, Cleric.

PRESTON
You asked me to become Father's instrument against the resistance ...

He gathers up all the momentum burning within him.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
I'm ready. Today. I wish to show my faith. I wish, with your permission, to begin immediately the search for underground.

DuPont considers him, this walking weapon, for a moment.

DUPONT'S IMAGE
To destroy it, Cleric?

Preston looks back at him, every atom of his body vibrating.

PRESTON
To destroy it.

84 INT. COLD STORAGE - CREMATORY CENTRAL - N/A

In a metal chair next to a metal tray that holds PARTRIDGE'S BODY. Preston sits, head in his hands - anguished.

Partridge is the light lavender of death. Just below his throat, the neat hole where Preston's bullet entered.

PRESTON
I'm so .... so very sorry ...

The door abruptly opens and he pops up, emotion instantly erased from his face. The Cremation Technician in the doorway gives him an odd look.

(CONTINUED)

84 CONTINUED:

TECHNICIAN
These are the possessions he had on him at the time of death. The illegal ones will be burned with him.

He walks out, closing the door behind him. Preston's eyes turn to the tray. On it are several of Partridge's effects. Keys, identification ...

And an ENGRAVED SILVER CIGARETTE CASE. Picking it up, Preston feels the fine engraving with his fingertips. Opens it.

Inside lie a dozen or more OLD PHOTOGRAPHS. He flips slowly through them, drinking in the details of each.

They are, of course, pictures of strangers, probably all long dead for the most part, from an age long gone by. A happier time.

Things look different. People are dressed differently. Colorfully. Women wear make-up. In many of the photos, both men and women are smiling and even laughing.

He stops, eyes rising quickly at the SUDDEN SOUND of VOICES approaching the door. Then, they fade away.

Returning his attention back to the photos, he turns to the last picture. It is turned over. On its back is written the word *FREEDOM*. He considers the word an instant ...

Then flips it over. And *freezes*. Shocked.

It is of PARTRIDGE. Standing with a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.

MARY.

Preston stares at the photo trembling in his hands for an eternal moment. A thousand emotions stabbing through him.

85 INT. COMBUSTION ANTE-CHAMBER - DAY

Preston stands watching as Partridge's body travels down the rollers into the hunger of the FLAMES.

Clenched hidden in Preston's fist, is the PHOTO.

86 INT. ROOM 101 - DAY

Preston sits opposite Mary in the high-ceilinged windowless room 101. She smiles, amused.

MARY
We have to stop seeing each other like this. People will talk.

86 CONTINUED:

But Preston is in no mood.

PRESTON
You said there weren't any others. You said you weren't part of any underground.

MARY
I'm not. There aren't.

PRESTON
Errol Partridge.

Her eyes flutter momentarily. Recovering, she shrugs.

MARY
The name's supposed to mean something to me?

PRESTON
A Grammaton Cleric, first class. You knew him.

MARY
News bulletin. I'm a Sense-Offender. I don't hang 'round much with the Cleric.

He places the PHOTO on the table, flicks it across with a finger. She looks at it, just for an instant off her guard.

Then just shrugs. Preston looks levelly back at her.

PRESTON
I want to know about him.

She looks back at him, equally level. But behind her lavender eyes, she's coming to some inner decision.

MARY
Well, I'd suggest you go ask him, but I understand that he's dead. Killed by your friends at the TetraGrammaton.

PRESTON
Not my friends -- me.

The smile drops right off her face. Shocked.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Tell me about Partridge.

Her gaze hovers on him an instant. Then, quick as a cat, she *lunges* across the table, grabbing up his pencil and *swinging* it hard at his carotid artery.

86 CONTINUED: (2)

But Preston isn't TetraGrammaton for nothing. Faster, he catches her and *slams* her back down on the table. For an instant, they tremble there, his face so close to hers he can smell her, feel the energy sweeping off her ...

Snap! the pencil clenched in both their hands cracks like a rifle shot.

Relaxing, he releases her and goes to the wall, facing it.

Runs his hand over his face, as though trying to erase the emotions that must surely be etched upon it.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
(quietly)
What was he part of?

MARY
You really want to know? You talk about service to Libria? You can't even imagine the sacrifice he was going to make before you murdered him.

Preston turns and looks back at her, every fiber screaming out inside him, longing to tell her.

PRESTON
You were ... lovers?

She only glares haughtily back. Neither affirming nor denying. And his pride will not allow him to ask again.

He turns to go.

MARY
Can I tell you something?

Without turning, he pauses in the doorway.

MARY (CONT'D)
I hate you. And everything you stand for.

He looks down a moment. Then gets the hell out of there before he says something he regrets.

87 INT. CLERIC DESKS - DAY *

The office is empty. Preston sits at his desk, contemplating the PHOTO of Mary and Partridge.

He turns it over. The word FREEDOM written there. Mocking him.

87 CONTINUED:

He stares at it. Then, intuitively, picks up a pen and writes an alphabetic number under each letter: 6 18 5 5 4 15 13.

He considers what he has written a moment. Circles the first number of each group.

615 5411

88 EXT. TELEPHONE - DAY

Preston stands at a payphone. A voice picks up ...

VOICE
Freedom Reading Room.

Preston hangs up.

89 EXT. FREEDOM READING ROOM - DAY

Preston stands across the street from a storefront whose sign reads BLOCK 42 *FREEDOM READING ROOM*.

90 INT. FREEDOM READING ROOM - DAY

Preston stops in the door. Arrayed in chairs at school-style tables, citizens pore over approved texts.

On the video screens around the room, the Faces of Libria smile.

FACES OF LIBRIA
I am Father; You are Father; Father is Everywhere ... *

Coming from behind a counter, the PROPRIETOR, a thin, nervous-looking sycophant, approaches Preston, ducking and scraping.

PROPRIETOR
Good afternoon, Sir. What will it be for you? The latest copy of *The Insensate*. A revised edition of the Manifesto?

Preston drops open his Cleric identification.

PRESTON
Errol Partridge. I want to know everything you know about him.

The Proprietor's sucking smile vanishes.

PROPRIETOR
I ... beg your pardon.

Preston turns to the room. *

(CONTINUED)

90 CONTINUED:

PRESTON
Everyone out - now.

The patrons scurry to comply, the place emptying in a matter of seconds. Preston turns back to the Proprietor.

PRESTON
I'm going to ask you one more time. Errol Partridge. Tell me what you know.

PROPRIETOR
I ... I'm sure I don't...

That's all he gets out before Preston grabs him by his collar, picks him bodily up and *slams* him down onto a tabletop - sending State-approved texts scattering.

The patrons of the reading room react, dully shocked.

PRESTON
You're an Offender.

PROPRIETOR
I..I..I..I'm not!

PRESTON
No? Then how is it you've come to be so frightened of me?

The Proprietor just lies there, shivering with fear.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
(growls)
Now - you will tell me everything there is to know about Errol Partridge or I will have a wagon come to take you to the Hall of Destruction for summary combustion.

The man sputters.

PROPRIETOR
I...I r..r..really don't know much.

PRESTON
Speak.

PROPRIETOR
H..h..he'd come in with a fellow named J..Jurgen.

Preston tightens his choking grip.

90 CONTINUED: (2)

PRESTON
Why.

PROPRIETOR
That's all I know. On Father, the Council - I swear it.

Preston abruptly releases him - circling the room; eyes scanning, sixth sense engaging, absorbing every detail of the chairs, books, floors, walls...

Stopping on a wall of books on which ther is a sign: Do Not Touch - Council Members Only!

He looks back to the Proprietor who has seen him see it - a look of ill-concealed alarm.

Striding over, Preston grabs him by his jacket and swings him *smashing* through the mirror.

It drops in a shower, leaving in its wake, a JAGGED HOLE that looks into A HIDDEN ROOM ...

A hidden room, walls covered with MAPS of Libria - diagrams and plans of attack ...

Where a DOZEN MEN, a desperate-looking group - like freedom fighters - sit frozen round a table.

91 INT. APPEARANCE MAINTENANCE 27 - DAY - OMIT

92 INT. HIDDEN ROOM - DAY

Preston steps through the shattered frame into the room. Slowly, he circles the table of stunned young men.

They know they are done for, they just can't believe it.

PRESTON
Which one's Jurgen?

No answer. He *slams* the table with his hand, making the maps and rolls of blueprints jump.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Which one's Jurgen!

Now they're too *scared* to speak.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
You're all as good as dust. So you might's well talk.

92 CONTINUED:

MAN
(speaking up)
Nobody say anything.

Preston goes forthright to that man and *kicks* his chair out from under him. The man, no more than 27, with dreadlocks and dark skin, falls to the floor - and lies their limply, knowing that to resist a Grammaton Cleric is to invite death.

Pulling his gun, Preston sights down on the man's forehead.

PRESTON
Are you Jurgen?

The man struggles for a moment internally. Then ...

MAN
He's not here.

Preston cocks the gun.

PRESTON
You're lying.

MAN
Go ahead. Kill me. I'm going to die anyway - if not here then at the Palace of Justice at dusk. There's nothing more you can take from me; from any of us.

PRESTON
You have a family?

The man pales.

MAN
(whispers)
They don't feel.

PRESTON
I don't care if they feel or they don't. They're suspect. They'll get contaminatory disposal - I'll see to it.

The balding man on the floor stares back at him.

MAN
You fucking cold bastard.

PRESTON
I'm listening.

The man hesitates. Then his features set.

92 CONTINUED: (2)

MAN
Go ahead. Kill me, kill my family; they're as good as walking dead anyway. What Jurgen's going to do to you and everything you stand for is well worth dying to protect. Isn't that right, Boys?

A murmur from around the table. Preston sees red. Reaching down, he *hauls* the man up and *slams* him down onto the table.

PRESTON
Tell me goddamn you!

The Man *stares* back at him - startled by his vehemence ... They all do. Startled that he could be so ... *impassioned.*

The darkness clears from Preston's eyes. He straightens, looking from face to face staring back at him - feeling naked ... exposed ... for an instant.

He covers by quickly searching the man's pockets. Comes up with an illegal MATCHBOOK with an address scribbled under its inner cover. Pocketing it, he looks back to the table once more, heart pounding.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Tell Jurgen I'm looking for him.

93 EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Alone, he stops in an alley, pushing his eyes into his hand. Trembling. Jesus ... what's happening to him ...

VOICE
Cleric John Preston!

Preston's eyes snap up. A SWEEPER TANKER has stopped just out in the street - two white-clad Sweepers with machine guns standing before it.

SWEEPER
You're to come with us!

Preston hesitates, hand moving an unnoticed inch towards his gun. In his eyes flashes the thought of standing and fighting.

SWEEPER (CONT'D)
Immediately!

A tense beat as Preston's eyes consider the dark barrels of the Sweeper guns. A deep breath. He relaxes.

94 EXT. STEPS - PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY

Preston is silent as he mounts the palace steps ahead of the two machine-gun toting Sweepers.

95 INT. OFFICES OF THE VICE-COUNCIL - DAY

When Preston is escorted in by the Sweepers, DuPont is staring out over the cityscape of Libria through the great T cut into the wall of his office.

When he turns, there is no trace of humour.

DUPONT
Cleric Preston ...

Preston swallows imperceptibly.

PRESTON
Sir.

DUPONT
I've heard the most disturbing rumour.

His pinning eyes make Preston go cold as the grave.

PRESTON
A rumour, Sir?

DUPONT
Yes. One that maintains that, away from the prying eyes of the world, one of us - one of the Cleric - has taken it upon himself to cease his dose. That one of our elite number - is feeling. Can you imagine?

Preston goes concrete inside. All he can think to say is ...

PRESTON
Feeling, Sir?

DUPONT
Are you playing with me Cleric!

A stark, ringing beat. Then Preston's voice comes, a whisper, dry as dust.

PRESTON
No Sir. I'm not.

95 CONTINUED:

DUPONT
This person, I'm told, is actually attempting to make contact with the Resistance. Now tell me, if you'll be so kind - how exactly have you been making use of your time of late?

A rigid beat as Preston stares back at this man who knows everything. It is all he can do to reach down inside and make himself speak his own death-sentence - saying what DuPont must already know:

PRESTON
Attempting to contact the Resistance.

DUPONT
Attempting!!! How is it that you intend to expose this traitor if all you do is *attempt!*

Preston stares back at the other man - as the astounding fact sinks in. DuPont doesn't know!!!

PRESTON
I ... I ... you're absolutely 100% right Sir.

DUPONT
Of course I am. The Cleric is the final line of defense. If the Resistance compromises it, we are doomed. Father is doomed.

Preston nods with a swallow of relief.

PRESTON
I will ... redouble my efforts. To locate the Resistance ... to find this traitor. And bring them all to your Council's fair justice. * *

In ill humour, DuPont dismisses him with a surly wave and, with a quick, curt bow, Preston gets the hell out of there as fast as he can.

96 EXT. HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

He stands before a hundred story housing complex. Ten thousand units, all identical. Consults the MATCHBOOK he took off the man in the hidden room.

97 INT. CUBICLE - DAY

The door creaks open and Preston enters. Silence. It does not appear that anybody is home. He walks through the cubicle - sixth sense engaged.

It is an ordinary cubicle, resembling his own.

He taps a wall, listening for hollowness ...

VOICE
You're wasting your time ...

He spins. The MAN that he roughed up in the hidden room at the personal maintenance bloc stands in the doorway.

MAN
I'd hardly be stupid enough to keep anything here.

PRESTON
You ....

He blinks at the man a moment, realizing.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
You're Jurgen ...

The man moves more fully into the cubicle.

JURGEN
You're feeling.

Preston hesitates.

PRESTON
I could be faking it.

JURGEN
(smiles)
Knowing what you know now - do you really believe that's possible ...?

Preston is silent.

JURGEN (CONT'D)
Do you know why you came?

Preston hesitates a beat.

JURGEN (CONT'D)
How could you? A thousand conflicting emotions. On one hand your commitment to the State; not so easily forgot.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

97 CONTINUED:

JURGEN (CONT'D)
The other, the abhorrence of the wrongs committed in its name...

He takes a step closer. Preston stiffens as Jurgen raises a hand ... and lays it on his shoulder. No one has ever in his life touched him compassionately before.

JURGEN (CONT'D)
And your natural desire for the company and friendship of other human beings.

Preston trembles as the words toll a resounding chord in him. He looks down, ashamed, as his eyes mist.

PRESTON
Why did you come?

JURGEN
That's very simple, Preston. We need you.

98 INT. CELLAR -DAY

In a bare, dank cellar hidden somewhere in the metropolis. Preston sits wired up to what looks to be an old, dilapidated LIE DETECTOR.

JURGEN
A test ...

There are SEVERAL OTHER MEN with them now. In the eyes of all of them, the glint of desperate, driven, chaotic men.

JURGEN (CONT'D)
Polygraph. It detects fluctuations of emotion ...

His eyes hold Preston's own.

JURGEN (CONT'D)
If there are any.

He nods to one of the men who turns it on. Jurgen paces slowly around the dim room for a moment. Then, stopping before Preston, he quietly speaks one word:

JURGEN (CONT'D)
Mary.

The needle on the graph *spikes*, registering sharply from flatline. Jurgen nods sadly, knowingly. *

JURGEN (CONT'D)
(quietly)
You're in love with her ...

98 CONTINUED:

Preston looks down, ashamed. Swallows hard, almost trembling.

PRESTON
I ... I'm not even sure what it is ...

JURGEN
Are you not then ... carrying in your left pocket, a red ribbon sprayed with her scent ...

Preston looks at him, shocked.

JURGEN (CONT'D)
... you breathe it in when you think there's no one to see ...

Preston is astonished. Jurgen kneels to his level, words dropping nearly to a rapid-fire whisper.

JURGEN (CONT'D)
And yet it's not enough. What you feel, it could only be satisfied folding yourself into her. Forever. That's love, Preston...

He rises, nods. Draws a deep breath, nods ...

JURGEN (CONT'D)
I should know ...

Preston looks at him - for the first time in his life - understanding completely what another human being is feeling.

PRESTON
She's scheduled for combustion.

JURGEN
I know.

Preston searches his features. How can he say it like that?

JURGEN (CONT'D)
You're thinking I'm cold. I'm like one of them. But it's not so, Preston. I'd do anything to save her. Anything at all. Except betray her.

He draws a deep, quietly passionate breath.

JURGEN (CONT'D)
To risk a rescue now, at this juncture, it would jeopardize everything we've worked for, everything *she's* worked for.
(MORE)

98 CONTINUED: (2)

JURGEN (CONT'D)
She's a martyr, Preston. A martyr. For us all.

He nods quietly.

JURGEN (CONT'D)
Come with me.

99 INT. OFFICE -DAY

Preston follows him into a small, windowless office, stacked high with books like *The Wealth of Nations, The Rights of Man* and reams of papers. It is the lair of the revolutionary.

JURGEN
Take a seat.

A beat. Preston complies. Jurgen settles into his chair on the other side of the desk. Lights a cigar.

JURGEN (CONT'D)
I was like you. But the first thing you learn - emotion has its price.

He shakes his head.

JURGEN (CONT'D)
It's a paradox. But, without restraint, even control - emotion is chaos.

PRESTON
But ...

JURGEN
(raises hand)
I know. The key difference is a matter of degree. When we want to feel, we can. So you see, in the case of Mary, though I desperately want to do just that, I can't allow myself that luxury - I have to see beyond my emotion.

He looks levelly across the desk at Preston.

JURGEN (CONT'D)
And so must you, Preston.

They look at one another, the last words hanging there.

PRESTON
What can I do?

Jurgen contemplatively taps his cigar on the edge of the ashtray for a moment.

99 CONTINUED:

JURGEN
You can kill Father.

100 EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Preston walks rapidly away down the busy sidewalk. Jurgen walks quickly a few steps behind him. Neither of them exhibits the slightest emotion but the truth is that both of them are exploding with it.

Invisible to all, Jurgen is pursuing Preston.

101 INT. ALLEY - DAY

He follows Preston into an alley where, out of sight, he grabs him and *slams* him up against the brick wall.

JURGEN
Listen to me.

Preston resists.

PRESTON
I *can't*. I can't do what you're asking!

JURGEN
But dammit, don't you see!?! You're our only hope!

PRESTON
I can't kill a man. The first time I understand what life is, you want me to *take* it. I can't. Don't you understand? I *can't*.

Jurgen releases him, taking a cold step back.

JURGEN
What about the Sweeper Team.

Preston looks back at him, realizing for the first time just how deep Jurgen's resources are.

PRESTON
That was different ...

Jurgen is silent, struggling before he himself spits out:

JURGEN
What do you think Partridge was doing?

Preston looks at him, shocked. But then, as it sinks in, of course ... it makes perfect sense.

101 CONTINUED:

JURGEN (CONT'D)
You killed him before he could do it.

He shakes his head.

JURGEN (CONT'D)
That's why you're a Godsend to us, Preston. You're the only person that can get through Father's security. Without you, we've lost everything. Without you - we're doomed.

Preston can only stare at him, overwhelmed.

JURGEN (CONT'D)
Think about it.

And he walks out of the alley. Neither of them seeing, standing on the sidewalk across the street, a MAN with his hands buried deep in the pockets of his overcoat. BRANDT.

102 INT. PRESTON'S BATHROOM - NIGHT *

Mirror pulled back from the wall, Preston deposits his day's dose of Equium into the cavity behind it - quite a collection growing there now ... *

When he closes the mirror, he catches sight of himself. Staring back into his own eyes - the eyes of a stranger - for a long time. *

103 INT. ROOM 101 - DAY

Preston sits now across from MARY in the cold white of room 101. There is a long silence.

MARY
My combustion has been scheduled for dusk. *

Preston nods. She herself looks down at the table now.

MARY (CONT'D)
... you keep coming ...

He says nothing.

Abruptly, his watch begins beeping - alerting him that it is time to take his Equium. It beeps starkly in the silence of the concrete room between them. Quietly, he turns it off. *

She watches him a beat.

103 CONTINUED:

MARY (CONT'D)
Aren't you going to ... dose? *

He does not reply, silently staring down at the table ...

PRESTON
'Mary' ...

He traces a pattern on it with his finger.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
... it's a beautiful name ...

Her eyes narrow. *Did he say what she thinks he just said?* He does not look up at her. She cocks her head, *realizing.*

MARY
My God .... you *feel* ...

He says nothing. Until finally ...

PRESTON
I've been to see Jurgen ...

She remains silent. Stunned. Riveted on him.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
They want me to kill Father.

He looks up at her for the first time.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
And another thing ...

Eyes brimming now with unconcealed feeling.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
I'm in love with you.

She stares back at him a long moment. Then TEARS, big and full as diamonds, begin pouring silently down her cheeks.

They both just sit there like that for the longest time. Until finally ...

MARY
... what will you ... do ...

Preston looks down.

PRESTON
... I don't know ...

She nods, silently. Sitting there ... *

103 CONTINUED: (2)

Neither acknowledges the SURVEILLANCE CAMERA, a black eye staring down ...

But quietly, sliding slowly, nearly imperceptibly forward ...

... at the risk of everything ...

... in the center of the table ...

... their fingertips ...

... touch.

104 INT. HOUSE OF THE TETRAGRAMMATON - DAY

The House of the Tetragrammaton - the vast palace where Father dwells. Preston intercepts DuPont on his way down the corridor with his BATTALION OF BODYGUARDS.

PRESTON
Sir - a few moments?

DuPont considers him an instant - then nods.

DUPONT
Walk with me. I'm to see Father.

105 INT. HOUSE OF THE TETRAGRAMMATON - SECURITY AIRLOCK - DAY

Preston follows DuPont through a heavily guarded security airlock. DuPont nods to the brutally armed Sweepers.

DUPONT
He's with me.

The Sweeper Teams duly relieve Preston of his firearm and allow him to follow DuPont through the heavy METAL DETECTORS.

106 INT. H.O.T. HALL OF MIRRORS - DAY

Into a long, BAROQUE HALL whose ceilings soar to over 30 feet. Lined along its walls and in parapets half-way up, HEAVILY ARMED SWEEPERS stand vigilant.

Preston takes it all in as he walks at DuPont's side.

DUPONT
Cleric? I believe it was you who came to see me ...

Preston snaps his attention back to DuPont.

106 CONTINUED:

PRESTON
Yes Sir, if you recall, I'd spoken to you about a Sense Offender critical to my investigation into the underground ...

Dupont fixes him with his eyes.

DUPONT
The pretty one ...

Preston cannot hold his eyes - looking down.

PRESTON
She's scheduled to be incinerated today. I cannot locate the resistance without her aid. I'm ... I'm begging you.

DuPont studies him - long and deep.

DUPONT
Well Cleric, as it turns out I've already spoken to Father about this person on your behalf. He was, sadly, unyielding. She'll burn as scheduled.

Everything within Preston shrivels.

PRESTON
But Sir, perhaps you could intercede with the Council, you could ...

DUPONT
(cutting him off)
His will is hard, Cleric - but that's what makes him great, yes?

When Preston finally finds it in himself to speak, it is with an empty whisper.

PRESTON
Yes.

DUPONT
And that we prevail in the face of adversity makes us ourselves great, yes?

Preston climbs the dark, dark hill in his heart.

106 CONTINUED: (2)

PRESTON
Yes.

DuPont seems pleased as they stop at the HEAVILY GUARDED GILDED DOORS at the far end of the hall.

DUPONT
If you are able to follow this through to its end - you'll choose your own reward.

Heart dark, Preston holds on the other man a moment.

PRESTON
My reward, Sir - would be the pleasure of knowing that I had freed Father ...

He takes a last look at the huge heavily guarded hall.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
... from the terrible necessity of all this security.

DuPont looks at him a curious instant - then signals to the guards who open the great doors. Allowing him to pass through into audience with FATHER.

Preston stands there as the guards re-shut the doors peremptorily in his face.

107 INT. ROOM -DAY

A windowless room hidden somewhere in the stark metropolis. * Walls cluttered with maps and diagrams and plans of attack. A meeting place of revolutionaries.

JURGEN and his COMPATRIOTS are here. Across from Preston. *

PRESTON
At least fifty men. Maybe more. *

JURGEN
What about an audience? Could you somehow arrange to meet with him? That would get you through security.

PRESTON
Father never sees anyone. Ever. He's * too afraid of assassination. *

A tough silence.

JURGEN
They trained you your whole life to fight these kind of odds, Preston ...

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED:

Preston is silent, struggling.

PRESTON
Even if I could - even if I could make it through - what guarantee is there it would accomplish anything? That anything would be different?

Jurgen nods, rising to the catalog of maps and blueprints that paper the walls. A giant map of citadel Libria ...

JURGEN
We have a network that's larger than you imagine. The instant word is gotten that Father is dead, that the Council is leaderless, bombs that have already been planted ...

He indicates on the vast map - here ... here ... and here ...

JURGEN (CONT'D)
... they'll be set off in the Equium clinics and factories around Libria. If we can succeed in disrupting the supply for even one day, our cause will be won by human nature itself.

He looks at Preston.

JURGEN (CONT'D)
Will you? Will you do it ...

Preston is silent again, waging a battle that's already lost in his heart.

PRESTON
What about war? The everyday cruelties that are all gone now ...

JURGEN
Replaced by the TetraGrammaton. You do it for us wholesale, don't you ...

A heavy silence. Preston knows he's right.

JURGEN (CONT'D)
Will you do it?

The longest beat.

PRESTON
Yes.

108 EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Jurgen sees Preston out to the sidewalk. He catches Preston's arm. A beat between the two men.

JURGEN
Don't do it. Don't go to see her ...

He shakes his head.

JURGEN (CONT'D)
It'll only make it harder to do what you have to do.

Preston stares at the other man. A difficult nod. The two men, both in love with the same woman, shake hands.

109 INT. SURVEILLANCE HUB - DAY

Preston sits alone at the monitors WATCHING as MARY, in her cell, is read her sentence, placed into a diaphanous robe, and is led out ...

He stares - stark - at the empty cell where she was, wanting to cry out, to go to her. It is the most painful thing he's ever experienced ...

VOICE
Sir ...

He glances sharply up - the Security Technician has returned to his post, a memo in his hand.

SECURITY TECHNICIAN
You'll be glad to know - the microphones are back up in 101.

He nods, pleased.

SECURITY TECHNICIAN (CONT'D)
You'll have full text of the next offender you interrogate prior to burning.

Preston can only stare back at the other man.

110 INT. CLERIC DESKS - HALL OF ENFORCEMENT - DUSK

Preston sits at his desk before his monitor. Dead inside.

110 CONTINUED:

PRESTON
(finally)
File footage ...

The MONITOR whirs, popping to life ... Preston swallows.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Viviana Preston ...
(difficult)
... sentence and incineration ...

The monitor whirs again and a single grainy black and white angle of a BEAUTIFUL DARK-HAIRED WOMAN standing in a cell surrounded by expressionless men ...

One reading to her from a parchment.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
(dusty)
Auditory

The SOUND of the reading man's voice crackles to life.

MAGISTRATE
... Viviana Preston, for ceasing your Interval, for the crime of feeling, for the placing self above society, you stand condemned to death. You are to be taken from this room to the city furnaces where, exactly one hour from now, you will burn.

Each of her arms is taken by a man in a white smock and, head high and proud, she is led out of the room.

With a dead hand, Preston ZOOMS the screen in on one of the expressionless UNIFORMED CLERIC BYSTANDERS.

It is HIMSELF, watching hard and unmoved as his wife is led past him, out of the room and to her infinite end.

At the desk - Preston is TREMBLING.

Abruptly, he leaps to his feet and, mindless of the turning eyes of the other Enforcers in the building, he RUNS out.

111 INT. PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY - OMIT

112 INT. DETENTION WING - DAY - OMIT

113 INT. CELL - PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY - OMIT *

*

114 EXT. PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY *

Car slammed to a halt at the bottom of the steps, Preston charges up the palace steps. *

*

115 INT. PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY

Fairly flying down the corridors, turning heads as he goes tearing by. *

116 INT. PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY - OMIT *

*

117 INT. DESTRUCTION WING - PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY

Skidding breathlessly to the security checkpoint, flashing his badge. *

PRESTON
Cleric! I need to pass!

He agonizes while the GUARD scrutinizes his ID. He thrusts back his sleeve - looking at his watch. Exactly 5 O'CLOCK. * *

PRESTON (CONT'D)
The 5 O'clock! Has the 5 O'clock been incinerated yet ...? * *

SECURITY
We don't keep track of scheduling here. You're clear to proceed d...

But Preston is already gone. *

118 INT. DESTRUCTION WING - PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY

The guards come to their feet at the secondary checkpoint as Preston blasts by them - alarms ringing - without stopping. *

GUARD
Hey!

119 INT. DEATH-WALK - PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY

He skids around the corner in time to see a short column of people walking down towards the INCINERATION CHAMBER at the distant end of the long, low corridor.

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED:

In the center of the column, in a hooded, blood-red robe, MARY walks barefoot. *

PRESTON
Mary!

120 INT. DEATH-ROOM ANTECHAMBER - DAY

Stopping just outside of the Incinerarium, an INCINERATION TECHNICIAN begins removing Mary's robe. She looks peaceful, registering no surprise when she looks up and sees Preston running towards her. *

PRESTON
Mary!

A guard moves to stop him, but he shoves the man aside.

INCINERATION TECHNICIAN
Hey now...

PRESTON
(flashing badge)
Cleric, I have to question this person, now step back.

The Technician looks uncertainly to the ARMED GUARDS.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
(threatening)
I said *step back!*

Cowed, the technician releases Mary's robe and steps back. *

Preston turns to her, voice dropping to a desperate whisper.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Mary, listen to me - I've made this * mistake once before; I won't make it * again. I can't be without you. I can't. * I don't care about anything else. I don't care about the Council, Father, any of * it. Just being with you...

MARY
Preston ...

PRESTON
(urgent)
No *listen* to me. I can take these people, I *can.* We can get out of here.

She looks at him a peaceful moment.

120 CONTINUED:

MARY
And then what ...?

He stares back at her - trembling - unable to answer.

She looks at him for the deepest moment. Then, sadly, shakes her head.

MARY (CONT'D)
My one regret is that we didn't have more ... of everything ...

She touches the side of his face. The Incineration Technician and guards look shocked. But Preston makes no move to stop her, his anguished eyes drinking hers.

PRESTON
Mary, you don't understand - I'll die here with you, I don't *care* ...

She nods.

MARY
I do understand. But understand me - I go to this fire for a reason.

Shaking her head with the greatest gravity.

MARY (CONT'D)
Promise me - it's not for nothing.

He stares at her, tortured, anguished. He starts to speak, but she stops him.

MARY (CONT'D)
Promise me ...

All he can finally manage ... is a mute nod. She nods too. Kisses his cheek and turns to the Incineration Technicians.

MARY (CONT'D)
I'm ready.

They remove her robe. The door to the incineration chamber sucks open and she steps in. She turns, looking at Preston, so beatific, so utterly beautiful, as the door sucks shut.

There is a moment. Then behind the small window, there is a *WHOOSH!* and a brilliant flash of orange. She's gone.

121 EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

In a state of shock, Preston shuffles down the Palace steps and merges into the flow of sidewalk traffic pedestrians.

121 CONTINUED:

He walks like that, unfocused, shell-shocked, for several yards before - finally, simply - dropping to his knees.

Pressing his face into his hands - he WEEPS.

Passersby turn and stare as he openly cries his heart out.

A PAIR OF POLISHED SHOES stops in front of him. Blinded by tears, Preston looks up at the silhouetted figure towering over him.

BRANDT
Cleric John Preston - you're under arrest.

122 INT. PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY *

Officers and civilians alike turn to stare as Preston is driven ahead of Brandt and three armed and uniformed Enforcement officers.

He has been severely beaten. He stumbles and Brandt kicks him from behind, propelling him crashing forward onto the floor.

Brandt, panting, looks at those who stare back at them.

BRANDT
This man - a Senior Cleric! Has ceased the Dose! He is *feeling!*

He *kicks* Preston again. Preston takes it with less emotion than he'd expressed even before he began to feel.

BRANDT (CONT'D)
This man! Is the worm that has been eating at the core of our Great Society. And *I* have brought him for your justice!

He hauls Preston to his feet, hissing into his ear.

BRANDT (CONT'D)
I told you I'd make my career with you, Preston.

123 INT. OFFICES OF THE VICE-COUNCIL - DAY

DUPONT is in the midst of a dictation to his secretary when the great carved doors fly open and Preston comes stumbling in - crashing into a heap on the floor.

BRANDT
Vice-Council! This man is guilty of consorting with Sense Offenders, of having relations with a female ....

(CONTINUED)

123 CONTINUED:

His lips curl as he speaks these last most damning words.

BRANDT (CONT'D)
Of Sense Crime itself.

DuPont looks at them both - surprised. Nods to a SWEEPER standing at the door.

DUPONT
Dispatch a search team to the Cleric's quarters to search for unused Equium. *

The man salutes and exits instantly to comply.

BRANDT
That won't even be necessary, Sir. If you run the trace record on his sidearm, you will see that it was *he* who was with the Sweeper Team when they were killed.

Vice-Council DuPont considers him for a moment. Then, pulling his keyboard forward, he runs the trace.

He stares, astonished, at the result. Looks to Preston.

DUPONT
Cleric - I assume you have something to say to me?

A beat. Then, bloody, Preston pulls himself up off the floor.

PRESTON
I know ... it's hard to believe ... that a Cleric of the TetraGrammaton ... could turn his back on everything he has been taught ... to become a sense offender ... to become associated with the resistance ... even becoming ... a champion ... a * provacateur in its underground movement ... but it's true...

Brandt's eyes burn bright at the confession. Preston nods.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
I promised I would bring that man to you. And I have.

He looks at Brandt - who looks confused for a moment. Then baffled. He looks to DuPont who shakes his head.

DUPONT
Cleric Brandt - the trace shows that it was *you* in the Nether with the Sweepers. *

123 CONTINUED: (2)

He turns the screen so that Brandt too can see the trace record. Brandt *stares* at it. *His* gun in the Nether. *

BRANDT
B..But it's *impossible* ...

DuPont only blinks back at him. Abruptly, Brandt *reaches* inside his coat - the GUNS of the Sweepers that accompanied them *snap* up ...

He freezes - then slowly draws the gun out by the muzzle. And sees for the first time, etched into the butt in fine letters - *Grammaton Cleric Preston 782.* *

And he *flashes back* TO HIS CAR:

124 EXT. HOUSE ZONE -DAY *
The house in the Nether burning ... *

ENFORCEMENT OFFICER *
Hey! Got something out back! *

As Brandt turns back, Preston hands him his gun. *

PRESTON *
Your firearm, Cleric - it may prove *
useful. *

BACK - Brandt's eyes shoot up as he realizes.

BRANDT (CONT'D)
He *switched* them.

He holds the gun up.

BRANDT (CONT'D)
You see?? I have his gun.

PRESTON
(dry)
Of course you do. You took it when you arrested me.

Brandt stares at him. At them all. Feeling the walls tumbling down all around him.

DUPONT
I suppose I should have known by the enthusiasm, the very rabid passion with which you pursued this task. A fervor reminiscent almost ...

His eyes narrow on Brandt thinly. *

(CONTINUED)

124 CONTINUED:

DUPONT (CONT'D)
Of a man feeling.

Brandt goes grave-cold. DuPont nods to the Sweepers.

DUPONT (CONT'D)
Take him to the Hall of Destruction for summary judgment and combustion.

The three black-clad guards *grab* Brandt, who can't believe it, dragging him out.

BRANDT
No! It's him! Him! Not me! Him!

And he is gone. DuPont looks to bloodied Preston.

DUPONT
Of course, since a complaint has been lodged, the law and the letter is that I allow the team to carry out the search of your premises. Do you think that's entirely necessary, Cleric? Or am I being ... to unyielding?

Preston wavers only an instant.

PRESTON
As you say, Sir - it's the law and the letter.

DUPONT
(smiles)
And it doesn't disturb you in the least that he's going to his end?

Preston looks at him.

PRESTON
How could it?

DuPont smiles to himself again. Right answer, as always.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
It disturbs me only that I am Father's instrument - yet have never had the honor of meeting him.

DuPont looks at him, surprised.

DUPONT
But Cleric ... you know Father never gives audience to anyone ...

124 CONTINUED: (2)

Preston steps through the dark doorway in his heart.

PRESTON
Even the man who brings him the Resistance?

The two men regard each other - a Faustian bargain struck.

125 EXT. PRESTON'S APARTMENT MEGAPLEX - DAY

When Preston pulls up, several WHITE VANS are massed outside at the curb, SEARCH UNITS coordinating.

A search coordinator approaches as he emerges from his car.

SEARCH COORDINATOR
Cleric, you understand, this is just a formality ...

But Preston just waves him off.

PRESTON
I've nothing to hide.

126 INT. BUILDING - DAY

But the second he enters his building, beyond the reach of the preparing searchers' eyes, he *breaks* into a run.

127 INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Flying up the stairwell ...

128 INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Bursting into his apartment.

129 INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Skidding into his bathroom where, adrenaline surging, he yanks the mirror away from the wall.

And stops dead. *The Equium is gone.* He thrusts his hand deep into the cavity - but nothing is there. *

He stands, pulse pounding. *Where did it go?*

VOICE
Looking for something?

He whirls. ROBBIE'S cold eyes stare back at him. A beat of stark, ringing truth ...

The boy's hand rises - opening.

129 CONTINUED:

Revealing a small sea of amber ampules. *Preston's Equium.* His eyes shoot back up to his son's.

The search teams - can be heard. Coming.

ROBBIE
If I were you ...

His hand folds closed.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
... I'd be more careful in the future.

Preston stares at the boy - shocked. He is even more stunned when LISA appears. Robbie places his hand on her shoulders in a way that could only be described as fraternal.

And it hits Preston all at once - *they're feeling too.* They always were. Only concealing it - from him.

PRESTON
But how ...

The boy looks at his Father with a gravity far beyond his years.

ROBBIE
You forget - it's my job to know what you're thinking ...

Man and Boy look at each other. Like staring into a mirror.

PRESTON
Then you know what I'm going to do now.

The boy just looks back at him - and simply says:

ROBBIE
Yes.

130 INT. ROOM - UNDERGROUND HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Preston sits at a table, phone to his ear.

PHONE
You're connected with the Vice-Council.

DuPont's voice comes on the line.

DUPONT'S VOICE
Cleric Preston ...

130 CONTINUED:

PRESTON
It's done. I've found the Resistance. *
*

Like Judas with Christ and his disciples, Preston SITS with JURGEN and his top men. He exchanges a glance with them. This is their sacrifice, their doom - and they know it.

PRESTON
Send a wagon now - you'll have them all.

Preston terminates the line - looks to the others. Grim.

131 EXT. BUILDING - DAY

He stands by watching as white-clad Enforcers lead Jurgen and his accomplices into the waiting wagons. *

His eyes meet Jurgen's as he is shoved into the wagon. The message in the revolutionary's own eyes is clear - I go to my death, I pray you do what must be done.

The door is slammed shut. An Enforcer nods to Preston.

ENFORCER
The Vice-Council has sent me to tell you - you may think of any reward you wish.

PRESTON
Tell the Vice-Council there's only one thing that will make me complete.

The Enforcer looks at the killing machine standing before him.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
To meet Father.

132 INT. LIMOUSINE - DUSK

A red satin interior, sumptuous like the interior of a coffin. Preston rides alone in the back.

He opens his hand. In it lies the RED RIBBON. *

133 INT. HOUSE OF THE TETRAGRAMMATON CORRIDOR'S - DUSK

A SERVANT ushers Preston through the corridors.

SERVANT
Do not address Father unless first addressed by him. Avoid eye-contact.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

133 CONTINUED:

SERVANT (CONT'D)
If you should break his four foot personal safety zone, you will be put down immediately by the snipers. Understood?

Preston nods, hardly hearing the man through the rush of thoughts in his head.

SERVANT (CONT'D)
You'll be required to surrender your firearm, of course, and pass through a series of metal detectors. And then there's the test ...

Preston looks at him, alarmed.

PRESTON
Test?

They stop at the steel door of the SECURITY AIRLOCK.

SERVANT
Yes, yes - you don't imagine we'd risk exposing even such a dedicated servant as yourself to Father without first having you tested did you?

Preston's heart beats. A test?!? The servant ushers him ... *

134 INT. SECURITY AIRLOCK - DUSK

... into the long, low steel chamber that designates the gateway between Libria and the inner-sanctum of Father.

A SWEEPER steps forward. *

SWEEPER *
Your firearm, Cleric.

Preston hesitates - then surrenders the weapon. A DOCTOR * steps forward. *

DOCTOR *
Here ...

He indicates a LIE DETECTOR next to the metal detector. *

DOCTOR(CONT'D) *
Sit.

Preston looks around. There are seven Sweepers in here, all heavily armed. He has no choice.

He sits. Two technicians quickly hook up the sensors.

134 CONTINUED: 134

DOCTOR
We'll start with a test question first.

He nods to the Polygraph Tech who flicks the machine on.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
More of a riddle actually. What, would you say, is the easiest way to get a gun away from a Grammaton Cleric ... ?

He smiles. And ANOTHER VOICE fills the blank:

VOICE
Ask him for it.

Preston looks sharply to see a LARGE WALL MONITOR flickering to life with the FACES OF LIBRIA.

ALL SEVEN of the Sweeper's guns snap up in line with Preston's head.

FACES/GIRL
Did you really think we'd be so stupid...

FACES/WOMAN
As not to know you were feeling, Preston?

The Polygraph needle starts - registering Preston's surprise. The face changes now to FATHER'S friendly FACE.

FATHER
After all, did you forget ... ?

And Father's own face changes to ONE FINAL FACE whose features are different but whose shape and bone structure are identical - and whose eyes lance back into Preston's own.

DUPONT'S.

DUPONT'S IMAGE
I'm everywhere.

The POLYGRAPH goes *nuts*, expending a sudden flurry of ink as Preston's emotional response redlines. As he realizes that Father was nothing less than Dupont all the long.

DuPont smiles slightly.

134 CONTINUED: (2) 134

DUPONT'S IMAGE (CONT'D)
Don't look so surprised, Preston. Father was just a fiction created by the Council to personalize our control, to better control the population.
(shrugs)
They chose me as the frontman.
(slight smile)
Bad choice on their point as it turned out. I had the entire Council executed 13 months ago.

He nods.

DUPONT'S IMAGE (CONT'D)
And now, Preston, you've hammered home the final nail. You've consolidated my power, given me the Resistance.

The perspective on the screen WIDENS slightly. To include the head of a WOMAN DuPont stands just behind.

MARY.

DUPONT'S IMAGE (CONT'D)
And everyone connected to it. Only someone who was truly feeling could have done it. Bravo.

Mary's eyes, proud and misted, try to turn from the screen, trying not to give DuPont the satisfaction - but twining his fingers into her hair, he forces her face forward.

DUPONT'S IMAGE (CONT'D)
And now Preston, I have you as well. Calmly, coolly. Utterly without incident.

Preston stares trembling back into the screen. A million colliding thoughts igniting behind his eyes.

Then, in an instant, they all disappear - replaced by the abyss.

PRESTON
No ....

Slowly, he shakes his head.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Not without incident.

Behind him, the needle on the polygraph, that had been vibrating madly with his pounding heart ...

134 CONTINUED: (3) 134

Suddenly drops to a smooth flatline.

POLYGRAPH TECHNICIAN
(realizing)
Oh ... *shit* ...

And before anyone knows it, Preston has *stripped* the GUN from guard just behind him and *BLABLAM!* has shot the doctor between the eyes.

As that man goes down - like the Phoenix - Preston rises.

Electrodes falling away like guy wires, *BLADAM! BLADAM! BLAM!* in the blink of an eye, faster than thought, he guns the seven guards down in their tracks - they never stood a chance.

Retrieving his first gun, he kills the Polygraph Technician and pauses - looking at the cine-screen ...

On which DuPont's visage stares back at him - *astonished* at the turn of events.

PRESTON
I'm coming.

POW! he blows DuPont's startled image out of the screen and ducks through the screaming metal detectors.

135 EXT. HALL OF MIRRORS - DAY 135

Security Forces stream into the magnificent hall to meet him, but lest we forget, Preston is a Grammaton Cleric, First Class. He is the best.

In a blaze of fire, both guns bucking like pistons, he tolls in blood the history of every man who dares challenge him, rolling like thunder down the mirrored corridor.

GUNS flowing with the machine-like grace of a printing press, a blur of fire in his hands, he uses the GUN KATAS to fill * the statistical trajectories with blazing paths of lead.

Everywhere, the Sweeper Teams go down, withering under the fury of his unstoppable assault.

136 INT. ANTEROOM - DAY - OMIT 136 *

*

137 INT. FATHER'S BOUDOIR - DAY 137

Coming on like the Fourth Horseman himself, Preston follows * the collapsing bodies into a massive marble room of * incomparable beauty and elegance.

(CONTINUED)

137 CONTINUED: 137

Where DUPONT stands.

Quietly, silently, TWO PISTOLS dangling in his hands at his sides. Preston's eyes quickly scan the room.

Searching for Mary. DuPont holds on him steadily. Shrugs. *

DUPONT
You seemed so taken with her - I have to admit ...

A whimsical shrug.

DUPONT (CONT'D)
I was intrigued.

His guns snap up - Preston's *match* him millimeter for millimeter.

Slowly, they circle.

Preston moves his guns - DuPont's mirroring their movements, muzzle to muzzle - as though they were tied together by invisible strings.

DUPONT (CONT'D)
Remember, Preston - I'm Grammaton Cleric too. I know your thoughts - even as you do.

PRESTON
Then you know I'm going to kill you.

POW! he and Dupont suddenly and simultaneously fire, bullets colliding and EXPLODING in the air between them. *

POW! Preston *fires.* DuPont, synchronized with him, fires at the exact same instant and trajectory, bullets exploding into shrapnel between them.

And that's it, the dam bursts.

BLAM!BLAM!BLAM!, like pure ballet, a whirling, swirling, two-fisted swordfight with bullets erupts between Preston and DuPont ...

So accurate and so intuitive are they both that every bullet fired by one is parried - blasted out of existence - by the answering bullet of the other.

In an instant, the air is thick with screaming shrapnel as their bullets explode together in a machine-gun staccato of stuttering collisions.

(CONTINUED)

137 CONTINUED: (2) 137

Neither man able to get the edge over the other whose movements he instinctively knows.

The COUNTER on Preston's gun, flying down towards zero.

Abruptly, at ONE, Preston *spins* - aiming down at DuPont's thigh, drawing DuPont spinning and his own gun down in a mirror counter-movement ...

But at the last instant, Preston *doesn't* fire as *POW!* DuPont's bullet spits out of his gun and PUNCHES thru Preston's thigh.

A tight gasp through clenched teeth and Preston staggers ...

Then ... straightens ...

DuPont's gun has clicked open, having matched Preston bullet for bullet - all now spent. *But Preston still has his last one.*

His eyes come up, *clear.* He took the bullet on purpose. He directed it where he wanted it and took it.

He raises his gun in line with DuPont's forehead.

DUPONT
Wait!

Preston does.

DUPONT (CONT'D)
Look at me. I'm *life.* I live. I breathe. I feel. Now that you know it - can you really take it?

Preston stares back at him - the words not without effect as the emotions battle inside him.

Finally, quietly, he drops the lever on his pistol grip so that the LCD on it now registers *"Explosive round armed!"*

PRESTON
Father is everywhere.

BLAM! he drills the explosive round into DuPont and ***BABLAMMM!!!*** Father, the man behind the curtain of Oz, literally explodes.

Preston drops his guns.

And, looking up, begins, for the last time, to hunt for something that has been hidden.

(CONTINUED)

137 CONTINUED: (3) 137

His eyes slowly sweep, scanning the walls, ceilings and floors ...

Until they settle at last on a great framed mirror. Limping to it, he feels its surface.

Pushes. It swings open, like a door ...

138 INT. PUBLIC ADDRESS CHAMBER - DAY 138

Revealing the final hidden room. Inside, amidst all of the equipment that broadcasts the Faces of Libria, the greatest treasure of all.

Mary.

With a great gasp, she throws herself into his arms.

MARY
I thought you were dead.

They hold one another as if they will never let go. When they finally separate, they look long into each other eyes.

Then, limping over, Preston settles in at DuPont's PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM.

Keying the mike, he flicks it on. It crackles whirring to a

static hum ...

PRESTON
Libria ... there is a new message ...

139 INT. OFFICES OF THE CLERIC - DAY 139

Clerics and Enforcers alike all stop, turning to the omnipresent screens where the ever-changing FACES OF LIBRIA speak PRESTON'S WORDS ...

FACES OF LIBRIA
The Dose is dead - Equium is finished...

140 INT. PALACE OF JUSTICE - DAY 140

And on the Death-Walk to the Incinerarium's, JURGEN, his COMPATRIOTS, and their astonished guards all turn to look at the faces speaking to them from the screens ...

FACES OF LIBRIA
The back of the Cleric is broken...

Jurgen and his fellows exchange a look of amazement.

141 INT. CLERIC MONASTERY - DAY 141

ROBBIE among them, the young Clerics-in-training all stop in their classes, heads turned towards the screen ...

... where the faces, for the first time in history, STOP changing, settling finally on one single face ...

And one final voice.

Representative of all humanity ...

Preston's.

PRESTON'S IMAGE
And Father is gone - forever. *

And, for the first time in his own history, he smiles.

Silently, to himself, Robbie smiles back.

142 INT. FATHER'S QUARTERS - DAY 142 *

Dropping the mike, Preston looks to Mary.

PRESTON
Shall we? *

143 EXT. TERRACE - DAY 143

She helps Preston out onto the windswept terrace that overlooks Libria. The city stretching into the horizon.

They look out over its vast panorama.

All across Libria, FIREBALLS begin rising up into the sky as, one after another, the EQUIUM FACTORIES explode. *

Preston turns to Mary. She to him.

In the light of the explosions, they kiss.

THE END